

DIARY OF A  
FRENCH PRIVATE  

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GASTON RIOU

23 } on 1917



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FRENCH PRIVATE

## SOME REVIEWS OF THE FRENCH EDITION

EMILE FAGUET in *Les Annales Politiques et Littéraires*, March 5, 1916:—

I had the honour . . . three years ago to write the Preface to M. Gaston Riou's first book, *Aux écoutes de la France qui vient*. It was full of fire, impetus, and passion; it was a heart-beat. I was not always of the same opinion as the author, but I never failed to share his sentiments. I felt in him at once a brother in patriotism and a brother in love of truth and justice. I greeted him affectionately and contradicted him tenderly. You all know the success of the work. The public learned and has remembered a new proper name. M. Gaston Riou now presents us with a very different book, but one painfully entrancing, as its title implies, *Journal d'un simple soldat, guerre—captivité, 1914-1915*. . . . M. Riou now shows himself to be an extraordinarily delicate and lively painter of real life, a charming painter of landscape, a vivacious narrator, a thoughtful, conscientious, and penetrating psychologist alike in respect of individuals and of nations. At once artist and thinker, the artist never does injustice to the thinker, while the thinker always gives the artist free play.

*Chicago Daily News*, May 1916:—

Out of the mass of books, good, bad, and indifferent, which have been written about the great war, there is one, *Journal d'un simple soldat*, by Gaston Riou, which stands out as a work that will live and pass down to future generations as a masterpiece.

REV. FATHER MÉNAGE, O.P., in *La Revue des Jeunes*, Feb. 25, 1916:—

The author of these pages is a man of energy and self-command. But he is something more. What gives the work a distinctive character is the profundity of its psychologic sense.

*Daily Chronicle*, March 24, 1916:—

It has grown out of the war, but it is more than a war book because it has thought, feeling, knowledge, and English readers of French will appreciate its great charm of style.

A. BILLY in *Paris Midi*, Feb. 9, 1916:—

These pages are the diary of the man who, among all the French prisoners, was perhaps best fitted to understand Germany from within.

*La Tribuna*, Feb. 20, 1916:—

Though not a novel, it is as engrossing as a novel.

DANIEL LESUEUR in *La Renaissance*, March 18, 1916:—

Every one should read this record of imprisonment, whose realism—simple, trivial, and at times almost repulsive—is irradiated with a beauty which no work of romantic fiction can ever equal.

MARCEL ROUFF in *Mercure de France*, April 1, 1916:—

The book will gain by being read and re-read after the war, when the coming of peace will have restored to us that independence of mind which is necessary for the adequate appreciation of works of art.

PAUL BOURGET in *Echo de Paris*, April 28, 1916:—

I consider the *Journal d'un simple soldat*, one of the best examples of the literature of war impressions which has characterized the conflict now in progress. . . . The book is as impassioned as a novel and as living as history.

# THE DIARY OF A FRENCH PRIVATE

WAR—IMPRISONMENT  
1914—1915

BY  
GASTON RIOU

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH  
BY  
EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL



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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

GASTON RIOU was born on January 7, 1883. He is a native of the Cévennes, the region from which are derived three of the most distinguished among modern French psychologists, Melchior de Vogüé, Auguste Sabatier, and Paul Bourget. The Cévenole family from which he springs played an active part in the wars of religion. On the mother's side he is related to Jacques de Vaucanson, the leading French mechanical engineer of the eighteenth century, and also to Majal Désubas, the last Huguenot martyr, executed at Montpellier in 1747. Thus by family tradition he is liberal, nonconformist, and republican.

Propagandist by temperament, he devoted himself at an early age to the study of Christian origins. In 1905, at the Sorbonne, he wrote a thesis upon the De unitate of St. Cyprian. His first published writings dealt with the modernist movement of Loisy, Murri, and Tyrrell, and they attracted considerable attention in Italy and in Germany. The ardour which inspired them was very different from the rabies theologica. The young author, though Calvinist by conviction, adopted an attitude remote from partisanship, his view being, "Whatever is Christian, is ours." He insisted upon the need for a new synthesis, embracing at once the ancient faith and the actual conditions and the social life and thought of our day. He contended that the non-Roman churches scattered throughout the world might well constitute the embryo of a new Catholicism. But above all, in this writer simultaneously republican and Christian believer, was manifest the earnest desire to reconcile the France of '89 with the Christian ideal and the longing to witness and to assist in the renovation of his country. Writing of him at this period, M. Emile Faguet, a noted French critic, declared: "His ardour, his fire, his impetus, the rush of his blood, are all instinct with the passion of patriotism."

In the year 1913 this admixture of religious uneasiness and nationalist hope found expression in a volume entitled *Aux écoutes de la France qui vient*, which from the first attracted widespread attention. Above all, this work embodies faith in France, and the leaders among the younger men of the country rallied round him who had ventured to proclaim this faith. M.

*Jean Finot, editor of the Revue des Revues, bestowed upon Gaston Riou the title of princeps juventutis. Since then, with the coming of the war, all France has regarded the Ecoutes as a work of prophecy. We read in it the phrase: "Silently and studiously an élite is in process of formation. The members of this élite are united, as it were, in heroic friendship, for they are all animated by a single passion, the desire to renovate their country, and they are all inspired by the same faith, simple and strong. When others despaired, they did not despair. They are confident that a splendid morrow, worthy of the finest epochs of our history, is now germinating in the furrows of our motherland."*

*Nor was it in France alone that Aux écoutes de la France qui vient attracted attention. In Germany, Karl Lamprecht, the great pangermanist historian, devoted two lectures to it at the royal court of Dresden. In Zukunft Maximilian Harden exclaimed: "The publication of such a work suffices to prove that je-m'enfichisme [the Gallio spirit] is dead in France, and that young France is turning away from the scepticism of the masters of French literature."*

*Riou collaborated with Bergson, Henri Poincaré, and Charles Gide in the publication of a historical study, Le matérialisme actuel, an attempt to summarize the tendencies of contemporary thought. Of this volume a critic declared: "For France it celebrates the close of the age of negativism, and heralds the opening of an epoch of lyrical effort, of affirmation, and of activity."*

*When war broke out, Gaston Riou had just returned from a journey in England, Scotland, and Wales. He went to the front among the first, took part in the fighting in Lorraine, and was mentioned in dispatches. He was wounded in the battle of Dieuze, was taken prisoner, and passed eleven months in a Bavarian fortress. This was not his first visit to Germany. A year earlier he had been sent there on an official mission, and he is personally acquainted with many Germans of note.*

*The fruit of his imprisonment is Journal d'un simple soldat, which we are now publishing as The Diary of a French Private. In its native land the success of the book has been extraordinary, and the sternest of French critics have with one voice declared it to be a permanent addition to literature. Paul Bourget, Emile Faguet, Camille Mauclair, and Maurice Donnay all speak of it as a masterpiece.*

TO  
GUGLIELMO FERRERO

WE. Had we laid their hearts bare, we should have found there, not so much war, as justice and humanity.

MICHELET.

THEY. I begin by seizing what I want; there are plenty of pedants in my realm who can prove my right to it.

FREDERICK II.



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# THE DIARY OF A FRENCH PRIVATE

*September 2, 1914.*

## REMINISCENCES OF A PREVIOUS JOURNEY

HERE I am a prisoner.

What a journey! I am bitter at soul; it makes me sick to think of it. Across Rhenish Prussia, the Palatinate, the grand duchy of Baden, Würtemberg, and Bavaria, for three days and three nights, at every station, and even as we pass through the countryside, groups of peasants and gloomy crowds of citizens hurl execrations at us, stamp, and shake their fists, making signs that they would like to cut our throats and tear out our eyes. From the streets of country towns, lost amid the sweltering plains, troops of children assemble, waving flags. They form up in line beside the track. When the train comes in, moving slowly like a funeral convoy, they beg for our képis; they vociferate in their own language, "Paris *kaput*! Death to the French!" The sight of the red cross armlet produces paroxysms of fury. "Death," they scream, "death to the red cross men! These are they who finish off our wounded!" The

shouting becomes strident, terrible, mad. Sometimes they try to take the train by storm, and are stopped only by the bayonets of the German soldiers on guard in each compartment, who growl out threats.

The women are even more horrible than the men. The murderous glance, the clawed fingers, working and tearing as if in the dream of a tigress, the nostrils dilated and twitching, the lips cyanosed, grimacing hatred—never before have I seen such faces of damned souls, such Medusa heads. Who could believe that women should appear so horrible! . . . When the train stops for any time, richly dressed matrons parade beside it, offering our guards mugs of beer, cigars and cigarettes, bread-and-butter and jam, steaming sausages. Sick with hunger and fatigue, we look on at this prodigality. "Above all," they say, "give nothing to these French! Let them starve!" We are offered water.

Everywhere, at the stations, from the steeples, the factories, the inns, huge flags are waving. Chime answers chime across the rivers. The big cathedral bells make the hills re-echo. All Germany is holiday-making, drunk with blood, thrilling with the prospect of victory.

Is this the Germany I knew last year?

I had travelled through the country in the company of Marcel Chabrières, as if on a pilgrimage. We passed through Heidelberg, my peaceful Heidelberg, so lovable in the shade of its august ruin and of its oak-crowned and vine-clad hill; Marburg, the quiet little town with its professors and its workmen, resting more quietly at

the foot of the margrave's castle than even the bones of St. Elisabeth of Hungary beneath the pavement of the church ; Dresden, that fine seat of artistic and courtly life ; Munich, the Teuton Florence, blooming like a flower ; Weimar, more sacred than all the others, where the neighbouring houses of Schiller and Goethe mourn discreetly the memories of the golden century, the lyrical and generous youth of Germany ! . . . We were charmed with these laughing cities of the spirit. I can still picture them in the limpid air of last spring, I recall their dainty aspect, and the cheerful welcome they accorded us ; I see their waters reflecting the blue skies and the bright clouds. When I but think of them, in this damp crypt of exile, gusts of liberty, youth, and ecstasy agitate my heart.

We had strolled through the docks of Cologne and of Hamburg ; we had visited Elberfeld, Barmen, Hagen, and Essen, the smoky iron-towns of Westphalia. Near the great forges of M. Krupp von Bohlen we had admired the fairylike village of Margaritendorf, where brutal modern industry would seem to have pledged itself to put its slaves to sleep every evening in an idyllic retreat. From the window of the train, on the journey from Hamburg to Berlin, passing through a country of pines and lean fields, we had a glimpse of Friedrichsruhe, the lordly domain where sleeps the "honest broker" who made the empire, "awaiting the resurrection of the just."

After the gentle sweetness of the ancient university towns, we were intoxicated with the energies of this new world, this world of pride and of money, of sweat

and of lucre. Even in ugly Berlin, the parvenu town, we paid our respects to the titanic effort of a nation in the full vigour of life, ambitious, stubborn, determined to dazzle the world, to take the place of Athens, of Rome, of Paris, convinced of its destiny to rule the universe.

But every one talked to me of peace.

Since I was upon an official mission, I was able to converse with the men in whom young Germany recognizes its masters. They all spoke with one voice. They declared that their race had an ecumenical mission. Patriotic, active, prolific, it was inevitably destined to control Europe. "But for this," they added, "we need peace."

"Why, then, are you armed?"

"We have no natural frontiers; our plains lie open to the invader both from the east and from the west. English merchants are jealous of our successes; France obstinately refuses to grasp the proffered hand of friendship; Russia is becoming panslavist. Caught in such a vice, how can we ensure peace in any other way than by arming for defence? But we have no need of war. In twenty years we shall be eighty millions, and we shall be rich. Do you imagine that it will then be necessary for us to unsheathe the sword in order to play our proper part in the world?"

This was the language employed to me by liberals. It was the language of M. Simon and M. Wolf, editors or owners of the two leading journals in Germany; of Max Weber of Heidelberg, the keenest intelligence I

have ever known; of Troeltsch, the distinguished sociologist; of Windelband, the successor of Kant and of Fichte; of Vossler of Munich, the Romance philologist, rival of such men as Ferdinand Bruneau and Joseph Bédier; of Liebermann, the celebrated Berlin painter, who has supplemented the labours of Paul Cassirer in order to introduce the work of our impressionists into Prussia; of Lichtwark, the director of the Kunsthalle in Hamburg; of Naumann, the editor of *Hilfe*, who supplies ideas to men of the left wing in politics; above all, of a man more influential than any I have yet named, Carl Lamprecht, the Saxon, whose gigantic history of modern Germany has taken the form of an epic in honour of William II.

Young men, who across the Rhine are "liberals,"<sup>1</sup> talked in just the same way.

I shall long remember the night we passed at Frankfort in the company of M. Moritz von Bethmann, cousin of the Chancellor. How ardent was his confidence! He was far from being a malcontent. He had no desire for any kind of "restoration"; and still less did he wish, in the name of a Frederick Barbarossa or of a Frederick the Great, to anathematize the present. He accepted it joyously, delighted to be living in it, eager to carry his full

<sup>1</sup> On this point I am in entire agreement with my friend François Poncet. His little book, published a year before the war, *Ce que pense la jeunesse allemande*, besides being couched in an admirably concise and clear style, is of substantial value.

share of duties and hopes. But his lightness of heart was neither studied nor ostentatious.

I recall very precisely his reply to the charge of materialism which, on the spur of the moment, I levelled against new Germany. His rejoinder was spirited and instantaneous.

"Do you really believe," he said, "that we are going to rest satisfied for a long time in the boastful materialism that ensued upon the victory? You dare to say this, at the very moment when Kant and Fichte are once more being restored to honour; when, just like you, we are discovering the 'buried temple,' internal values, faith! Allow me to assure you that the young men of Germany are at this moment more exacting in matters of spiritual nourishment than your young men of the Agathon type and the group that runs the *Action française*. Our minds cannot give themselves up to a stupid or politic adoration of that which our intelligence, fully conscious of its work, has destroyed. Though it may cost us more suffering than you, we demand that our hearts and our minds shall preserve full freedom of judgment, and we know how to await their decision. We are not prepared, under pretext of spiritual nostalgia, to accept outworn formulas which would compel us to shun and to disavow the social order we owe to science, history, commerce, and democracy. We shall not give ourselves up to the cult of any religions which, however venerable they may be, are surcharged with fossilized rubbish and proud of



their state of petrification, which would have no understanding of our scruples, and would be absolutely unfitted to fecundate our real life!

"I do not know if the renascence in France takes the form of swearing by the middle ages, or by the seventeenth century, or by Bonald and de Maistre, and of invoking maledictions on the work of '89.<sup>1</sup> . . . The German renascence, if this be so, is at the antipodes of yours. But do not imagine that we are iconoclasts. As much as any others, we like to come to terms with tradition. But we insist that tradition shall not hinder our freedom of movement, that it shall either make us live or let us live. Is that vaingloriousness? When we claim the privilege of living, of thinking, and of creating, no less freely than did the men who founded the tradition of the middle ages, or than those who founded the tradition of the seventeenth century, are we not within our strict rights, and is not the exercise of these rights a positive duty? We may be wrong, but we believe that a new world is in course of construction. The work that has to be done is of greater value in our eyes than the work that is finished, however venerable and august the latter.

"I am a close student of your new political litera-

<sup>1</sup> Many German liberals have held the opinion, in all good faith, that the new generation of France is reactionary. I do not know why, but a young man coming from Paris, and having nothing to do with either royalism or clericalism, was regarded by them as a remarkable exception.

ture. Will you permit me to say that I discover therein a carping and regretful tone? It seems to me that its chief effort is devoted to blackening and decrying the regime you have chosen, to undermining confidence in it. Our efforts take the opposite direction. We are all for construction, adaptation, glorification, lyric enthusiasm. We accept our national mission. We accept our present life. We desire that our energies should continue to increase, to coalesce, to become intertwined. You will see; when the right moment comes they will secure for us a hegemony, and beyond question it will be the most humane and the most pacific of hegemonies."

Our conversation was a lengthy one. All the conventional barriers had been cast down. Every one gave utterance to his own truth, as if speaking to himself alone, in that species of lucid exaltation which sometimes results from a prolonged vigil. And the strange thing was that in proportion as behind the verbal agreements we sensed ever more strongly the depths of unexpressed antagonisms, we felt each for the other an increasing esteem. The hours passed. All the lamps in the Frankfurter Hof had been extinguished, except our own, which continued to burn in the great reading-room, its yellow light piercing the smoke-wreaths from our cigars, and exhibiting the virile and yet refined features of the young banker. We passed out into the open. The porter was asleep. The streets were deserted. After this great duel between our respective national

dreams, the cold of the night was agreeable. Through the ancient street where the young Goethe, locked up by his father in the corner room, had watched Gretchen going by, we gained the banks of the Main. The first streaks of dawn were already illuminating the broad surface of the river, peopled with motionless vessels.

This was a year ago. Now the war has come between our dreams.

I remember this as if it were yesterday.

At Leipzig, again, I see a small and cheap room, an eyrie in the Inselstrasse, among the great printing houses. It was attractive none the less, almost touching in its simplicity, the ugly little place, with an empty cup of coffee on the edge of a deal table laden with papers, and, fixed to the wall, two shelves for books. It was a cell, showing that its tenant was a man devoid of all vanities, a stranger to the amenities of our century. Here, one fine morning, after I had rung the bell five or six times, I was welcomed by M. Wilhelm Baum, editor of *Die Akademische Rundschau* and president of the "Free Students."

Mlle. Marianne Lamprecht had drawn my attention to this young man as a sort of *princeps juventutis*. Her father thought highly of him and assisted him in his undertakings. The society of which he was the leader had ramifications throughout lettered and scientific Germany. All its members were serious

workers; its mere existence had overwhelmed with ridicule the reputation of the old aristocratic "corps," those little courts of idlers, where the gilded youth of the fatherland, under the pretence of study, spends all its days in drinking, duelling, and drabbing.

The appearance of M. Wilhelm Baum surprised me. Over his night-shirt he had hastily donned a short and seedy jacket; his hair was untidy; he was a small man of awkward aspect. The cinders from the stove, scattered here and there, scrunched under our feet. My eye was caught by the teaspoon, still wet, among the manuscripts. The man was in keeping with his surroundings. Yet, when I had seated myself on an ancient sofa with broken springs, my second glance at this "prince" aroused sympathetic feelings. A secret flame illumined the blue eyes, the ascetic brow, and the sickly countenance, revealing, in this shy youth of twenty-five, a strong and lofty soul.

He, likewise, confided to me his hopes.

They differed little from those of M. Moritz von Bethmann. But on the lips of M. Baum they received an apostolic breadth. The young banker had not shown that he felt any insurmountable horror of war, which he regarded merely as a useless expense. M. Baum, on the other hand, whose entire mentality was under the influence of evangelical radicalism, detested war as barbarism and as a manifestation of antichrist.

At one o'clock, since I could not make up my mind to leave him, I persuaded him to dine with me at my

hotel. Marcel Chabrières had spent the morning at the museum among the tinted marbles of Max Klinger. He was astonished to find that I was already on a friendly footing, almost intimate indeed, with this young German.

Enthusiasm is the bread of youth. Youth loves the impossible, and will accept life only through a passion which colours it with iridescent hues, invests it with a halo, and endows it with heroic lineaments. This meal was one of those moments of transfiguration when the world seems malleable and impregnated with divine fire. Our minds were filled with a vision, the vision of a new classic age, as harmonious as the age of Pericles in Greece or as the third Christian century, but vaster, richer, more humane, sparkling with youth—an age which was to integrate and beautify the conquests and discoveries, still uncoordinated, of the last three hundred years. German and French, in this dream, came to an understanding. It is true that he considered that his nation, turning back to the tradition of Weimar, was to be the master-craftsman, whereas I contended that France had never ceased to occupy that role, which was her vocation and fulfilled her nature. But this difficulty seemed trifling. We were not so much antagonists as friendly rivals.

Is this man, I asked myself when he had gone, is this man typical of young and literate Germany? In the classic land of militarism, is it only the old who are swashbucklers?

A few weeks later, in early spring, on one of those afternoons in which showers alternate with sunshine, and in which the buds, swelling with sap, open, I was walking in the beech forest to the south of Munich. My companion, about thirty years of age, was in fine fettle. Tall and thick-set, florid of face, hair blond and bristly, he walked like a conqueror, and seemed in his element among these sturdy trees. The man of the woods personified ! I considered that this professor, already renowned, ought rightly in appearance to be rough-hewn, massive, dynamic, like a woodman at work. He was a hearty eater and a vigorous drinker, ruddy with health, absolutely innocent of the scepticism of drawing-rooms. I had several times before had the chance of admiring this man who reminded me of one of our Normandy horses. Above all, I had seen him at the Hofbrauerie in Munich, where we had washed down our political discussions with copious draughts of that dark beer, whose consumption in Bavaria is encouraged by old King Louis, chief brewer, and owner of the wealthiest tavern in the empire.

A country walk frequently encourages avowals which would never have been made during a thousand meetings in town, among sophisticated men. My companion had just confessed to me that he belonged to the "Social Democracy." As yet in secret only, for it is not permissible in Germany to wear openly and simultaneously the livery of the professor and that of the socialist. But the socialist party, suffering from a

dearth of intellectuals, desired him to become a deputy. At the first opportunity, he would exchange his professorial chair for a seat in the Reichstag. The ambition to revive Bebel in his own person, to become a new Wilhelm Liebknecht, made his nostrils dilate.

Somewhat mockingly, when with the impetuosity of primitive man he was speaking of the social mission of Germany, I said to him point-blank: "Admit that you think we are worn out, that in your eyes France is nothing more than an elderly beauty, with bald head, pallid lips, wrinkled skin, decayed teeth, enfeebled intelligence!"

"If I were a bourgeois," he answered laughingly, "I should answer in the negative. You still have your stockings and your bankers, matters of considerable importance in the eyes of the bourgeoisie of every land. But I am a socialist and a democrat. The minimum programme of our party is to effect the overthrow of Prussian absolutism, and to apply throughout Germany that parliamentary regime which is the *conditio sine qua non* of all social advance. But you French, for your part, hold this parliamentary regime in scorn. What would you have me think of a nation which repents of its virtues, which makes fun of its chief glory?"

"Here in Germany we read your Maurras and similar writers.<sup>1</sup> We are told that in France these men have the ear of the younger generation. It astounds us. It seems to us insane, this cheerful renunciation of the tradition which has made you famous, and for which

<sup>1</sup> Vide *supra*, note on p. 17.

you are still idolized by all that is noblest in the world. Do you find this strange? When material force is failing you, you, the noble nation, become rabid apologists of the regime of force, of 'the man with the big stick.' You take Machiavel for master. You ask for a French Bismarck. You declare yourselves to be royalists, imperialists, absolutists. I can see no difference between your romano-positive young men and our own *echten Deutschen*, those energumens who deafen us in our public squares with their *hochs* to the Kaiser, who shout their *Deutschland über alles* at every *prosit*, and who pile monument upon monument in honour of the militarist Moloch, until the appearance of our towns becomes intolerable. Young Frenchmen converted to the Germany of the junkers, blood-brothers of our idiot of a crown prince! What a farce! But for us, the German socialists, this is merely an additional reason for the redoubling of our energies. Our watchword to-day is extremely simple: to raise in Europe and to carry onward to victory the standard of democracy which has fallen from the hand of France!"

"Such is really your idea of France, your own, and that of all the German left?"

"To speak frankly, it is with us a dogma that generous and humane France is dead, and that all that was best in her spirit has entered into us."

We walked on for some time without saying a word. The idea never occurred to him that these wholesale judgments could possibly shock or pain me, for he was



one of those happy men, common in Germany, endowed with a veritable talent for frankness. He continued his terrible strides, and after a while he exclaimed gaily: "Anyhow, you don't bring enough children into the world to be socialists. Our ideas can germinate only in dense crowds, where there is hardly standing room, where people lack air and space, breed without restriction, and have nothing to lose! Your *Einzweikindersystem*<sup>1</sup> condemns you to be nothing but bourgeois, and poor bourgeois at that!"

I made no answer. What answer was possible? He knew my ideas. He had been one of those who introduced my *Ecoutes* into Germany. Besides, it gave him so much pleasure to believe in our decadence, to be convinced that Germany, as far as democracy was concerned, was henceforward without peer in the world.

Indeed it is true, all these "young men of the left" were ardent believers in Germany's mission. But to justify this mission they did not, like the cynical pan-germanists, appeal to the *Faustrecht*, the right of the stronger; they did not speak of bloody conquests. Perhaps they thought of them, but such brutalities (which the German mind, even when finely tempered, accepts with little reluctance) remained hidden in the background, within the domain of possibilities, among the lesser evils and contingencies—profane delights which a platonic lover hardly dares to envisage even in his secret dreams. Idealists of the Michelet type, quaffing the austere wines of Kant and Fichte (recently

<sup>1</sup> The system of having no more than one or two children.

unsealed and served round at the universities by the new masters), they made an exclusive claim to the moral heritage of '89, of which we, they said, had ceased to be the heirs. Were not they the youthful neophytes of the democratic faith which the degenerate French had lost? Had they not passionately espoused the modern world, whose uncertain dawn had first ventured to shine on Paris, that slight and foolish city, but whose full noon was now to illumine the strong and loyal (*treu und fest*) town of Berlin, the guardian of the Rhine? Yes, *finis Galliæ!* It was theirs to lead the great caravan of the universe towards the new justice. It was their part, the part of these good Teutons, with their virgin spirit and their new blood, to direct in future the affairs of the human race. *Gesta Dei per Germanos!*

One of these young men was M. Wichert, director of the Mannheim museum. He was the favourite disciple of M. Lichtwark of Hamburg, and had also been a pupil of the late celebrated von Tschudi, grand master of the artistic life of Germany. Von Tschudi, it may be mentioned in passing, of course had a quarrel with William II, just like Bismarck, just like Haeseler, and Bülow, just like all the clever men in the empire who were unfortunate enough to possess a vigorous individuality. M. Wichert was a friend of our consul, M. Deschars,<sup>1</sup> who arranged a meeting between us.

<sup>1</sup> M. Deschars was killed by the Germans in Belgium, in August 1914, together with all the wounded and the staff of Dr. Sedillot's ambulance.

Son of a poor officer, and orphaned while quite young, M. Wichert went through his course of studies as best he could. His life is a romance. Loneliness; poverty; chance encounter with a Mæcenas; sudden abandonment of science for art; renewed poverty; unexpected patronage by the great pontiffs of art, Tschudi and Lichtwark; appointment as sub-director of the picture gallery of Munich; appearance upon the scene of the Magian kings, a delegation of aldermen from the town of Mannheim, modernist before all, offering him *carte blanche* for the creation of a museum; for a start the young Messiah purchases in Paris Manet's best work, "The Execution of Maximilian," Daumier's portrait of Michelet, and the "Man with the Pipe," the most famous of Cézanne's pictures; all Mannheim is terrified at its commissioner's prodigality; he defends himself before the entire town council, silencing some by his boldness, winning over others by his disinterested violence, by the aspect of his threadbare coat, and the thinness of his slight but ardent figure; thus he arouses that municipal patriotism which is so keen in the fatherland, convincing the councillors that he will do nothing less than make of Mannheim the leading art centre of Germany, and at the point of the bayonet he wrests from them a vote of confidence; shortly afterwards, a wealthy Jew entrusts him with five million marks for the establishment of a museum; he founds an art school to enlighten the Mannheim bourgeoisie, which is upstart, elementary, but open-minded and full of goodwill; his lectures

become fashionable in the town; he provides similar instruction for the common people; acting upon suggestions made by M. Osthaus, a rich bourgeois of Hagen, he establishes travelling exhibitions. In a word, Tschudi being dead and Lichtwark dying, M. Wichert allowed his own way at Mannheim, at twenty-five years of age figures in the role of co-ordinator, protector, inspirer of the artistic life of Germany. He has made up his mind to transform Mannheim—the Hanseatic city of traders and manufacturers, the mushroom town flaming red with its abundance of new bricks, an American city suddenly appearing in Europe—into a Jerusalem of the new art. He desires that the streets shall become beautiful, that their names shall have a poetic ring, that the squares shall be as harmonious as a house by Van de Velde or Niemeyer. He secures an order for the demolition of the theatre built ten years earlier in the “Jugend” style, and already an object of ridicule; a competition is opened for the design of the building which is to replace it. The whole town becomes crazy about art. A bourgeois is regarded as dishonoured if he has not given 40,000 marks to the museum to buy a Renoir or some Gauguins. If this apostolate continues, the people will checkmate the very Athenians.

M. Wichert talks to me in the following strain: “In the history of art nothing can rival the creative energy displayed by France. Romanesque, gothic, all the gothics, renaissance, baroque, rococo (the terms have no invidious meaning in Germany), directoire, empire—

all these are French. Throughout ten centuries you continued to bring forth styles which were so elegant and so convenient, whose taste was so confident, that they instantly captured the world.

"But have you suddenly become sterile? Is France, pre-eminently the nation of innovators, no longer competent to do anything but to copy its own past? Like your new sociologists, your furniture makers supply Louis XVI, Louis XIV, empire; your builders furnish Louis XVI, renaissance, and again Louis XVI. Have you really ceased to produce architects since Gabriel and Louis, cabinet-makers since Boule, enchasers since Gouthière? Or is it that you no longer care for anything but the old, like those respectable and fatigued ladies who cannot endure a new face, and ask only to be allowed to die in peace, surrounded by the things of their youth? However this may be, we often tell one another that France no longer possesses enough energy to survive the titanic act of giving birth to the modern world, and that she is now nothing more than a beautiful corpse, embalmed and laid to rest in a splendid museum.

"Here in Germany, believe me, we worship your artistic tradition. For centuries we could find nothing better to do than attempt to assimilate it. You have visited Cassel, Pilnitz, Carlsruhe, Potsdam; I cannot doubt that you felt at home in these royal palaces, which are nothing but replicas of Versailles.

"But I sometimes incline to think that the creative force which formerly existed in France has emigrated

to Germany. It is true that during the nineteenth century there occurred in France a splendid blossoming of sculptors and painters: Delacroix, Rude, Carpeaux, the landscape painters of Barbizon, the admirable school of Manet, and, coming down to to-day, Rodin, Degas, Maillol, Jouve, Vallette, the expressionists. Yes, unquestionably, even if your architecture (the master art which controls and co-ordinates all the rest) is decadent, your sculpture and your painting remain unrivalled.

“But are you not struck by the fact that during the last twenty years it has been in Germany, above all, that your innovators have gained appreciation; that many of them have had to secure their first celebrity in the foreign world, before they were enabled to harvest in France the fruits of a restricted glory, admired in their own homes solely by a group of cosmopolitan epicures? Are you not astonished that such a man as Van de Velde, who vegetated in Paris, should build palaces for our great manufacturers; and that Maillol, the sculptor, a most typical Frenchman, should find a place of honour in our museums while in France he is still almost unknown? Is this neglect deliberate? Is it because you are convinced that genius cannot flower to perfection until it has suffered, that you provide this chill atmosphere for your best artists? Or is it timidity, unwillingness to take risks, stupidity, provincialism? Whatever the reason, the air of France is to-day less favourable to creation than the air of Germany.

“In Germany there is an extensive public which

lives upon the hope of a new 'culture.' This public has nothing in common with the pangermanists. It includes few generals and few leaders of the bureaucracy. But it contains our best men of letters and some of our principal bourgeois, in a word, the general staff of wealthy, liberal, and parliamentary young Germany. There are some, like Stephan Georg, Wolfskehl, and Madame Osthaus, in whom this hope assumes an ardent and mystical character, becoming a true religion. While it is the fashion in Paris, at least so we are assured, to be frankly reactionary,<sup>1</sup> here all the men and all the women who wield the empire of mind are animated by a quasi-messianic spirit. Is it possible that Nietzsche, with his idea of the revaluation of values, has contributed to the spread of this spirit? I do not know. We wait; we aspire; we hope. To us to-morrow is sacred. Every one is striving towards forms of life and art which shall be more ample, more truthful, more expressive, more beautiful. Every one is making ready to welcome the wonderful butterfly which is to spring from this larval age. It is with us a matter of faith that the men will come, that they are now on the way, who can provide the artillery and the watchwords of the new civilization.

"I frequently visit Paris to attend the great sales; I am well acquainted with the superior smiles with which many of your critics greet our attempts. They make

<sup>1</sup> Let me repeat once more that such is the belief of every German liberal. In their view we are all nothing more than replicas of Charles Maurras.

fun of the curved outlines of our 'Jugend' buildings. For my part, I detest that style of architecture as much as they. Are we not now demolishing a theatre built after this design, although the mortar is hardly dry? But it is possible for us to destroy our architectural abortions. In Germany you can get money, all the money you require, for an artistic purpose. Can you do the same in France? Can you make sacrifices to an ideal incorporated in stone? No, you have too little faith. You believe in your bankers, not in your artists. You venture nothing in art; we hazard all, boldly running the risk of making a mistake. And, by building, we learn to build.

"Ten years ago we were making bad attempts; to-day we have discovered a system of architecture appropriate to modern requirements and at the same time beautiful. Go and look at the Weltheim in Berlin, M. Osthaus's home at Hagen, the new station at Hamburg. When you are in Hamburg get M. Schumacher, chief architect of the republic, to show you the plans of the magnificent public garden he has just designed, which is to cost fifteen million marks.

"Here money is the ally of art, the living art of to-day, the ally of artistic creation, whereas in your country money, more prudent, devotes itself only to the purchase of antique and catalogued beauty. I believe, in fact, that France lacks Medicis, whilst Germany possesses them in abundance. The reason is obvious. The wealthier members of our bourgeoisie are uneasy and discontented; they desire a true parliament which



will enable them to get the better of the junkers ; it is their nature to be progressive. Your bourgeoisie, on the other hand, has triumphed, and, since it has nothing more to desire, it is natural that it should dread novelty in philosophy and art no less than in politics. I know that what I am saying runs counter to all your hopes. But you can do nothing to change your destiny in this matter. France has entered the conservative phase ; we are now the creators ; we, henceforward, shall be the true successors of your masters."

Thus everywhere was to be heard the same refrain : the future lies in the hands of Germany ! Germany is the Messiah of the new art ; the Messiah of the socialist city ; the Messiah of modern thought ; the Messiah of the new classic age. She is the successor of aged France. It is she who will realize what the last of the great Frenchmen have dreamed.

In all these young men, the *élite* of the German nation, there was effervescing a strange force, there was surging an ardent and emotional nationalism, a veritable religion of German primacy. They considered that primacy inevitable. It originated spontaneously ; its increase was dependent upon organic growth ; and no accident, whether in war or peace, could either hasten or hinder it. They were all radiating hope ; they all had faith in the present, a warm vintage yielding a thick and heady must, of intoxicating aroma, and whence will be derived a robust wine for the peoples to drink.

They were sincere when they spoke of peace. Doubtless their idealist ambition was transformed into a materialist and brutal ambition among men of business, officers, and bureaucrats. For these latter, German production was to ruin that of England, the German will was to control the foreign chancelleries. But such ends cannot be secured without war.

Or they could be secured without war, only if Europe made up her mind to submit! Only if the English merchants were good enough to go bankrupt! Only if the greater Slavs should offer no objection to the enslavement of their little brothers on the Drina! Thus while the young liberals were dreaming of a pacific hegemony, Krupp was making his 420 millimetre guns, sergeants were teaching recruits to fear their officers as they feared God, and Berlin was fashioning new military laws which even the socialists, after some formal resistance, voted integrally.

But during this journey, the fact which struck me most of all was the existence of a liberal youth. I had not expected to find anything of the kind. I had been so positive that from the Rhine to the Vistula I should hear nothing but the noise of military accoutrements.

I had seen the German army in Strasburg, at the *Parole Aufgabe* in the Place de Broglie, when the general transmits to the officers' corps the orders and the passwords. The whole of this assembly, in its light-grey uniform in which a simple sub-lieutenant was indistinguishable from a colonel, made salutes.

The salute seemed to me the distinctive sign of this army, a fervent salute, involving the head and the entire spine, passing off in a smile at once triumphant and humble, martial and innocent, seeming to say, "How enviable I am in that I obey! How enviable I am in that I command!"

I looked down on this from the third story of the editorial offices of *Le Journal d'Alsace-Lorraine*. Suddenly I came to understand the feudal spirit, the cascade of absolute authority and of submission which formerly descended from the sovereign to the serf by way of the hierarchy of barons.

When I had crossed the Rhine, in the streets of the German towns the strength of this impression grew, until it became positively haunting. Everywhere I saw blind adoration of the uniform, overwhelming joy in wearing it; everywhere the intoxication of command, equalled only by the delight of obedience; everywhere complete ignorance of the essential equality of men, demonstrated first of all in the life of Christ, and which, once it is thoroughly understood, purifies politeness of servility, transforms obedience into affectionate collaboration, and transfigures power into service; everywhere, both in military and in civil life, I saw lords and servants, I saw the same man at once lord and servant, lord of those under him, servant of those over him—but nowhere did I see citizens. I saw servants, submissive, prepared for anything, obedient to every sign, mechanized and rejoicing thereat, convinced that it was to their interest to

be so, proud of the shape and strength of the iron hand of which individually each man was one of the innumerable phalanges. I was tempted to see in this the dominant characteristic of the German nation. A powerful nation, but one estranged from the modern spirit: a medieval islet in the midst of liberal Europe; a redoubtable nation wherein absolutism, exorcised elsewhere in '89, was patiently preparing its revenge, and whence some day, perhaps soon, would come the initiative of a combat to the death between feudalism and democracy.

Some weeks after the scene in the Place de Broglie, M. von Arnim, attached to the Prussian general staff, accompanied me through the barracks of Potsdam and the camp of Döberitz. The regiments of the guard were at drill. The order, the silence, were absolute, even in the case of those standing at ease. The drill ground was nothing but a vast solitude, like those great electric power works, which appear deserted, and where the only sign of life is the gentle hum of the dynamos. There seemed nothing human in this drill ground. From time to time there was a raucous cry, and the gloomy maniples advanced, retired, wheeled to the right or to the left.

"What a fine army of automata!" I said under my breath.

"That's it," exclaimed M. von Arnim, grasping at the comment, which had been made for my own edification alone, as a eulogium. "In France you cultivate individual initiative, but we avoid it like the

pest. The whole aim of our training is to break it down. All we need is to produce somnambulists, performing such and such an action upon such and such an order ; not reflecting, not reacting, but acting merely, passively, by instinct, responding to the order as a well-trained thoroughbred responds to the pressure of your knee. The soldier must not think. Above all he must not think. If we attribute so much importance to the rigorous carrying out of movements, if we push to the point of mania our fondness for these drill-ground evolutions which you regard as useless and ridiculous, it is because they break down thought, rout it, weary it, put it to sleep, and annihilate it ; because they reduce the human being to the level of a pure automaton. Show me a man who, by persistent drilling, has been emptied of thought, and I will show you a good soldier !

“On the battlefield, automatic obedience and fear of the superior officer take the place of courage. This doctrine has but one inconvenience : we shall sacrifice more men than you when we have to attack. This is of no consequence. We have less reason than France to make a thrifty use of our soldiers. Germany is prolific.”

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This German army, what a powerful mould it would constitute for a healthy race, one filled with the pride of youth but still requiring to be formed, one which had

not yet emerged from the simple gregarious stage, one without any of those dispersed indurations due to the appearance of irreducible individualities—a race still boneless and plastic.

I know not whether it was due to my actual experiences, or simply to French prejudice, but I came to doubt the reality of German liberalism, and to regard as isolated and uprooted exceptions those young men in whose company I had recently breathed the pure air of democracy.

No, I said to myself at this time, the German nation sets no value upon civil liberty; its Protestantism is mere window-dressing; its Reformation, in contradistinction to that of Calvin, was solely the work of its princes (*cujus regio hujus religio*); if there were any logic in events, the Germans ought to be Roman Catholics, whilst we ought to be members of the reformed church and modernists; Catholicism flourishes, and socialism is so successful, in Germany, only because both the one and the other correspond to a general need for regimentation and tutelage, furnishing an equivalent for military discipline to all those who come forth from barrack life. I noted, in fact, that German socialism had nothing in common with our own; that it did not represent the proletariat at all; that it was a sort of sub-bourgeoisie, comfortable, well-off, placid, and lacking that revolutionary fervour which arises from an outraged conscience; that it constituted a bureaucracy, a hierarchy, a church based upon Marxist dogma; and that it owed its

unbroken unity to the complete absence of thought and passion among its members.

At such times it seemed to me that the Prussian army was precisely suited to the German nation, desirous, not of self-respect, but of material well-being, friendly to that which controlled it, a people loving to be led. Yes, I said, such a nation needs such an army. And how fond the people is of the army. The bourgeois look upon it with fatuous affection. The kinglets of the empire are all eager to Prussianize themselves within the framework of this army; they all long to secure high command for themselves, if possible to become army inspectors, considering that the red band confers as much distinction as their crowns. I even went so far as to tax with duplicity the liberals of the great commercial and manufacturing world, comparing them to some territorial chief, who in outward aspect was pious and good-mannered, but who in an out-of-the-way court of his castle kept a number of hungry bears, prepared to loose them, as a final argument, upon any one who ventured to annoy him. At Dresden I had received a letter from M. Lichtwark, containing the following phrase: "The two finest types of modern man are the English gentleman and the German officer." It is too plain, I exclaimed, Germany worships her army; Germany worships herself in her army; the army is Germany; the army dominates the entire country, just as the colossal figure of stone which commemorates the iron chancellor dominates with its huge symbolic sword the

port of Hamburg and the forest of masts in the Elbe!

This doubt concerning the future of my young liberals returned periodically to sadden me. It was like an intermittent fever.

Was it possible to believe that they had the remotest chances of success, the Teuton Vergniauds who thought of renewing, after the lapse of a century, the adventure of the constituent assembly? Had they any clear idea of the terrible power of absolutism incarnate in the junkers and in the Prussian officers? These had no resemblance whatever to our eighteenth-century seigneurs, light-hearted, winning, generous, and philosophic—such men as Noailles, d'Aiguillon, and Montmorency, who spontaneously despoiled themselves on the 4th of August. I foresaw that it would be crushed without pity, this liberal impulse, so fragile even in its strength, the instant it transcended the sphere of art and letters.

"Give us ten years," the Munich socialist frequently said. "By that time the crown prince of Bavaria, who is a liberal, will have become king; the Prussian electoral system, the Bastille of the autocracy, will have been destroyed. But if we fail in Prussia, we shall have done with legal methods, and our watchword will be *Vive la Révolution!* For the death of William II will mean the regime of the sabre."

"Ten years," I rejoined, "is a long time in an epoch of tense and threatening rivalries. Are you not afraid that before this period comes to an end fear of de-



mocracy, ambition, and economic needs may force your government to declare war against us?

“ You will all be famous soldiers of the Kaiser, should that happen, you good liberals and socialists. You imagine yourselves opposed to militarism. But, without knowing it, you are its best resource, its great accomplice. You are such ardent patriots. You have so fanatical a belief in the destiny of Germany. How trifling is the difference between you and the pan-germanists. You desire hegemony without war; they desire it at all costs, even if they have to fight for it. What does this distinction matter? It will be so easy, when the right moment comes, to befool you. It will be so easy for the wolf to appear in sheep’s clothing; to masquerade as a victim; to pretend that Germany has been invaded; to give to a war of aggression and conquest the sacred aspect of a war of national defence!

“ Let us suppose that, through ill-luck, the war ends in a German success. Good-bye, then, to your dreams, to European idealism, to democratic dogmas. Great will be the discomfiture of your Tugendbund. The days of the Holy Alliance will return. When peace comes under these conditions your ‘borns,’ on their manorial estates, will luxuriate in the pious certitude that they are essentially different from the ‘not-borns,’ and that God has predestined them to be masters and leaders of men, just as, in the beginning, He created the white elephant and the royal tiger. Then, perhaps, in our defeat, we shall regretfully recall Sembat’s formula, *Faites un roi, sinon faites la paix*; then we shall hail

Maurras as a prophet ; inspired with a sense of renewed virtue, we shall mock at the civic dream which was our chief glory ; and we shall fill the world, again become feudal, with the clamour of our repentance. A fine spectacle indeed would be such a repudiation by France of the great vision of fraternal justice with which she intoxicated the nations. What will you do in those days, you German democrats, when the mother of all democracy is vanquished, when the only disinterested champion of your ideal has perished at your hands?

"But you may rest easy in your minds, for we have no intention of dying. We have agreed to three years' military service. We should agree, if needs must, to four years or to five. And do not, for this reason, accuse us of militarism. Our militarism is the militarism of Valmy. Full well do you know that we have no hidden thoughts of aggression or oppression. When we consented to the increase of our army, it was doubtless with a sincere desire to witness the overthrow of the barbarism of the kaisers and the crown princes, but we have never ceased to be faithful to the revolutionary watchword: 'Let us vote for war upon the tyrants and for peace with the peoples!'"

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The socialist of Munich, Wichert, the president of the *Freistudenten*, Moritz von Bethmann—how far away does it all seem now. They have killed ; we

have killed. Their glances full of youth and intelligence, which, when I was a free traveller, I received frankly, face to face, man to man; our conversations; our blossoming friendship; our common hope; the ideal, dear to Nietzsche, of the "good European"—what fragile things you are, beautiful creations of the mind!

Shivering on the cement floor of the casemate during the first night of my imprisonment here, I was continually haunted by the faces of my German friends. They did not smile at me as of old. Their eyes flashed. They glared at me like hawks. They pierced me; they wounded me. I was sad, sick at heart. How difficult it is to endure hatred. I seemed to hear bells ringing in my empty head. And always I seemed to see my friends' eyes, strangely transformed, harsh, greedy eyes burning with ambition, cruel, the eyes of treasure-hunters, such as one sees on the friezes of Susa in the beast faces of the Assyrian kings with long perfumed beards.

Here I squat in a corner of this crypt, hungry, thirsty, stupefied, my brain inert, lacking energy to do anything, looking on at my own adventures as if they were those of a stranger. Images of my experiences in the campaign, in which I seemed to have suffered fatigues beyond the limits of the credible, pass idly and almost indifferently through my mind. Already I seem to regard these experiences with indifference, like those military descriptions in Cæsar or Sallust, which no longer stir any one's emotions. I am aware of nothing

but my body. It seems strange to a man who believed himself to live upon ideas, to be reduced to become nothing but a stomach. I thought of Rabelais this morning, of Gargantua surrendering himself to his pleasures, of Frère Jean des Entommeures "wetting his whistle." My imagination wallowed in the sensuous delights, in the gigantic satisfactions of appetite, with which the four books abound. One needs to be positively starving to appreciate to the full the groaning boards of the monk of Chinon.

Our division had been sacrificed beforehand. Charged, I imagine, to protect the retreat, it had held firm. How, and for how long? A private in modern warfare knows nothing. This much, at least, is certain, that the division was wiped out. The battle moved away from us. The sound of the cannonade became more remote. Suddenly there ensued an intense calm. Of the horrible struggle, with the noise of which my ears were still ringing, there remained no sign beyond the abominable stench of the bodies now beginning to putrefy in the fallows and the vineyards beside the forest of Bride, and from time to time, rising from the deserted hollows, the prolonged and lamentable cries of the wounded who had been abandoned.

At Kerprich, in the district of Dieuze, in annexed Lorraine, I passed my first week of captivity.

What a week! Among the rearguard of the German army which flowed on like a river, dropping with sleep

and weariness, again and again aimed at by the patrols, by day and by night I carted human flesh. Dead, and more dead, dead men of all sorts, those who had been killed instantly in the heat of action, those who had bled to death from their wounds, men who, after being wounded, had been finished off by the scouts, had been shot at close range when they were asking for water or were endeavouring to keep themselves alive by eating lucerne; then there were the half dead, men shot through the head, men whose chests had been riddled; men shot through the groin. When I looked at these disfigured and groaning masses of flesh, it seemed to me as if my nerves were being scraped. The rest of the wounded found their way in unaided, running, limping, dragging themselves along, helping themselves with a stick, crawling on all fours. It was appalling. I saw an infantryman who had been shot through the chest and who had walked alone for a league, holding a white flag. He had lost almost all the blood in his body. I do not know by what miraculous strength of will he kept going. When he reached the field hospital he said: "I waited four days for some one to come. I am thirsty. I feel better, but I am thirsty." He smiled. He was beautiful, this young man, like a waxen St. Sebastian. Then, without a word more, he fell dead.

I had been assigned to the tent where those most dangerously wounded were brought. There were about forty of them, upon a thin layer of straw, and some even on the bare ground. The place swarmed with flies, and

it stank of dejecta and of dead bodies. When the sun was high, the heat was stifling. In the evening, the patients' teeth chattered with cold. Some of them were lads of the 20th corps, men with the colours when the war broke out, all Parisians, of simple and engaging courage, and able to take an interest in their bedfellows. There were men from Provence, the pain of whose wounds forced tears from their eyes, and who confided to me their amours as they might have done to a sister. When the pain was at its worst, they all cried out: "Maman!" It was heartrending.

I tended them. By day and by night, a thousand times I ministered to their needs. There were but two basins for seven hundred and twenty wounded. I made part of a shell serve me for a third. I watched the dying; I gave what consolation I could; I buried the dead. Always guarded by two Pomeranian soldiers, I went through the village begging soup for the poor lads. The inhabitants were utterly terrorized. Some of the women, one of them lame and one but a girl of twelve, astonished me by their persistent kindness. Under the eyes of the Germans as they were, the ardour they displayed, simply Christian in character, was truly heroic. Often, however, I had to make up for the lack of rations by a gay speech, overflowing with hope. Continually it was necessary to remake the straw pillows under the heads of the wounded, to rearrange their bedding, to help them to move. Always, beneath the low canvas roof, was to be heard the same orchestra of cries, hollow sighs, death rattles, and lamentations.

Occasionally, during the long, cold night, lacking strength to carry the body of some comrade who had just died all the way across the meadow to the burial pit, dropping the dead man, I would fall beside him and go to sleep there.

On the 20th, when our field hospital was already in fair order, a Prussian captain came by with his company. He stopped, commandeered the horse of our surgeon-in-chief, M. Bergé, and promptly mounted it. Then, in grating and sonorous French, he called out: "Fear nothing, wounded. I know that in your newspapers—I read them, the *Figaro*, the *Temps*—they term us barbarians. We are not barbarians. For my part, I bear a French name; I am the descendant of French refugees. My name is Charles de Beaulieu. I swear to you that you will be well cared for in Germany. Germany respects the red cross."

At noon on the 28th, having sent away those fit for transport and also those unfit, having performed a last amputation, and having buried the rest of the dead, we set out, with empty stomachs. What was our destination? The innocents, of whom I was one, had no doubt that we should be sent back to France by way of Switzerland. The others, those who had seen the wounded being finished off, especially the wounded officers, declared: "The German military authorities are unrelenting, even though the rankers are good fellows. The patrols who finished off the officers and some of the sergeant-majors were acting on strict orders. If they had been inspired by personal ill-feeling, do you

think it likely that they would give coffee and brandy to the wounded as they do often enough? Would they stop to tend them? It is the high command which is responsible for this base practice. Do you think those who set so little store upon the lives of the wounded will respect the red cross?"

Thus it was that, while we were on our way to Dieuze, carefully escorted, the members of our little troop were debating the question: "Are we merely detained for a time, or are we prisoners?" At Dieuze we were marched round the town. This was not necessary in order to reach the railway station, and our capture hardly seemed to afford adequate ground for a triumphal procession. But it was evidently considered desirable to show us off to the inhabitants, who made no sign.

A week earlier, when we had entered Dieuze as conquerors, the shopkeepers had filled our pockets with chocolate and sweetmeats; the publicans had given us free drinks. "Above all," said the people of Dieuze in plain terms, "take care that they never set foot here again!" Wishing for a French-German dictionary, I begged a townsman to get me one. "I don't use the article," he said; "I know no German." He called his daughter and she brought me her own dictionary. "Pay yourself," I said, offering her my purse. "Oh, monsieur," she answered, "I could not take money from a French soldier!" On the sideboard there stood a goblet, and she filled it for me with Moselle.

Throughout the little Lorraine town there was the lively commotion of a feast day. The army and the



populace were exchanging cheerful brotherly greetings. This delight at seeing one another again seemed so natural. Night fell. The weather was clear and warm. The noise of firing reached us from the vine-clad hills. The regiments were drawn up in line of battle in the streets. A hundred yards from the houses, behind the stooks, a French battery was shooting towards Vargaville. Having walked out to this battery, I enjoyed the only sight of beauty I had during my campaign.

In the calm air, the smoke plumes of the German shrapnel looked like fireworks. Near by, one of our regiments, spread out like a fan, was advancing through the oats. The men had spent the night in the barracks of the light horse. Further on, in the stubble and the green fields, under a rain of shells, the Alpinists were at work with their rifles, in cheerful mood. In good order they mounted the northern slope of the smiling basin between Dieuze and Vargaville. It looked like one of Van der Meulen's pictures. The sun was setting. The perfumed air was filled with shafts of light. After each discharge, the song of the birds and the humming of the insects was audible. Then, the limbers having been attached, the battery went off at the trot to another position.

On the 28th, on the contrary, Dieuze was like a city of the dead. No one appeared at the windows. Huge flags, celebrating the fall of Manonviller, had been hoisted by German orders. There was a gloomy silence, like that of a deserted inn, like that of Paris at four in the morning; but instead of the carts of the market gar-

deners and of the dustmen, there were heaps of empty knapsacks, broken rifles, rags soiled with blood and clay, which had been carted in from the battlefield. We marched quickly, keeping the French step, so that our guards were out of breath. Grey-clad regiments passed us without a word. When our progress was arrested by a number of forage wagons filled with wounded, a tall Prussian colonel, on horseback, wearing an eyeglass, accosted us in French, saying: "Fous n'avez pas honte, fous la t  mocratie fran  aise, d'  tre les alli  s des Russes, ces Parpares?"<sup>1</sup> Not one of us made answer. We did not even look at him. He sat there motionless. However, showing him my armlet, I inquired, "Are we detained, or are we prisoners?"

"Prisoners! You fire on our field hospitals!"

"Allow me to say, monsieur, that I do not believe it." Then we resumed our march.

The station; the long wait; the block of carts filled with wounded; a light cavalryman on foot, with bandaged head, advancing towards us, hatred in his eyes, threatening us with his revolver; the search of our knapsacks; the confiscation of our maps, knives, forks, razors, punches—everything which could be used for cutting or piercing. Then we entrained.

I am so foolish as to believe in the good faith of humanity. It seemed to me incredible that a civilized nation would not respect the red cross. "Unquestionably," I said, "they will send us to Switzerland."—"We

<sup>1</sup> Are you not ashamed, you, the French democracy, to be allied with the Russian barbarians?

shall see," answered Riffard, "whether our journey leads us southwards." Were we going south? This was the great question in dispute. Every one looked at his watch and examined the position of the sun. Since the railway line made zigzags, running sometimes to the south and sometimes to the north, we became divided into two camps, the "southerners" and the "northerners," the light of heart and the foreboders of evil. At times the dispute between the two factions waxed lively.

After a run northward, the train passed through Bensdorf, and at nightfall we found ourselves in the great station of Strasburg. There we were ordered to get out. We were shut up in a room on the landing, below the level of the railway, giving on the street. Through the grated door the passers-by gazed in on us. I was kept awake by the cold and my recent memories of the town. After some hours came the order *Vorwärts*, and a fresh entrainment. What was our destination? The first glimmer of dawn showed us the green hills of Alsace covered with plum-trees. Alas, we were going northward. Saargemünd. Rhenish Prussia. Saarbrück. Oh, Saarbrück! What a reception we had from the women of Saarbrück! My ears still tingle with their execrations. Then came the Palatinate, then Philippsburg. Good-bye to hope! I did not see the Rhine, for we crossed it in the middle of the night, and I was sleeping on the floor between the seats.

It was obvious when we awoke that we were going down hill. We crossed the duchy of Baden, traversed

Württemberg by way of Stuttgart and the Swabian Jura, with its green valleys, its woods, and its sparkling rivulets; at length, after crossing monotonous plains, at the bottom of a hill we reached Ulm, nestling on the Danube beneath its graceful Gothic cathedral. Our halt was made at Neu-Ulm, the first town we came to in Bavaria, and a town which I shall never forget, for it was there that we made the second meal of our journey. It consisted of a bowl of vermicelli soup in which a gobbet of meat was swimming. The previous day, at Zweibrücken (otherwise known as Deux-Ponts), we had been given a slice of *Leberwurst*. This pittance seemed heavenly to us, for we were starving after a three days' fast. Be blessed among all the towns of Germany, Neu-Ulm and Zweibrücken!

For the third time since our departure from Dieuze night fell. The train continued its journey, and its direction was now south-south-east. The southern faction was on the increase, and the wind was setting in the direction of hope. In the course of an animated discussion, rendered lively by hunger and by the doubts which Guido expressed as to the likeliness of our liberation, I fell asleep. At two o'clock in the morning the train stopped. I did not wake up. Abbé Guido, tough and rugged like the mountain district in which he toiled, one of those peasant priests who wed the church with fanatical asperity, just as they would have wedded their land, Guido was not asleep. He was sitting all of a heap in the corner of the carriage, wearing his képi wrong side before,

smoking cigarettes. From time to time the sardonic fold of his lips was rendered yet more bitter by a sigh as he said: "Ah! vidasse! qué vidasse!"<sup>1</sup> He must have given vent to the apostrophe, which showed his utter weariness of life, twenty times at least, when, morning having come, I awakened to the sound of this malediction.

It was an oppressive day. The sun was fierce; the sky leaden, without soul, without life. In the carriage it was stifling.

"Where are we?"

"At Ingolstadt."

Ingolstadt! The "forty propositions," Luther, Father Eck, the celebrated attempt to unite the two churches, the great "disputations" of the sixteenth century. But the sight of the bayonets of the Bavarian guard on the platform dispersed my train of reminiscences.

My stomach was complaining loudly. We were told that the stop was for six hours. The sergeant of the guard assured us that we were to be sent to Switzerland. Then a medical officer, thick-lipped and hook-nosed, with small, laughing eyes, a man who waddled continually with a sort of conceited good-nature, passed through the carriage, and said in a nasal accent: "Pas te malades? Pas te fièvres tes gôlônies?"<sup>2</sup> This Judaico-Swabian French revived our spirits. But the gnawing in our stomachs con-

<sup>1</sup> Provençal execration.

<sup>2</sup> Are any of you sick? Any tropical fevers?

tinued. Would they not give us a slice of *Wurst* or a plate of soup with a gobbet of meat in it? But they brought us nothing. The six hours had passed. The midday heat made the blood boil in our veins.

It happened but yesterday, and yet it has aged me by a century. I say it without hatred, without the shadow of a desire for vengeance. Under the ancien régime the crowd was amenable without restriction to talliage and to the corvée; now that it reigns, the crowd is gullible without restriction; it is nothing better than an unstable puff of vapour at the mercy of the winds. My heart is filled with pity for the crowd.

"Where are we going?" I asked of the *Feldwebel*<sup>1</sup> in command of the detachment.

"To Fort Orff, two leagues from here, towards the north. You will find there a thousand of your compatriots."

"Are you keeping the men of the red cross as prisoners?"

"So it seems. I can't understand it. At Fort Orff there are certainly quite a hundred *Sanitäter*."

"These are fine spoil!"

This *Feldwebel* was a tall, ruddy young man, trim of figure, gentle and shy. His name, he told me, was Conrad Kilian, and he was a schoolmaster from Upper Franconia. He stationed me at the rear of the column, beside himself, to act as interpreter. He was greatly concerned about those of my comrades who were too

<sup>1</sup> Sergeant-major.

obviously exhausted. "How on earth will they be able to walk uphill for ten kilometres?" This impotent kindness of heart was touching. The setting sun cast its rosy light over the Danube and the ancient city, bristling with church spires and surrounded by Gothic walls with massive towers. We passed through it under a deluge of cries of "Death!" And what a litany of *kaputs*! \* "Paris *kaput*! Manonviller *kaput*! Verdun *kaput*!" One might have imagined that the whole world was *kaput*! The gentler-minded among the townsfolk flashed electric torches in our faces, saying modestly: "You know that our armies are but a few leagues from Paris?" The better educated regaled us with French. "La foilà," they said mockingly, "la grande nation!" People streamed out of the public-houses as we went by. On the threshold the calm and paunchy drinkers waved their mugs and vented their guffaws. The whole city was agog beneath the great royal and imperial standards. It was really ludicrous, all this fuss about fifty field hospital orderlies.

It was quite clear that the German nation was the martyr of Europe. "As for us," said my friend the *Feldwebel*, "our conscience is quite at ease!" Yes, we, the French, were the aggressors; we were the *apaches* who had come furtively (*sicut fur in nocte*) to disturb the dignified repose of these excellent people, full of humanity, thoughtful and gentle! It was

\* A slang word, universally employed, meaning "smashed" or "ruined." - Accent on second syllable.

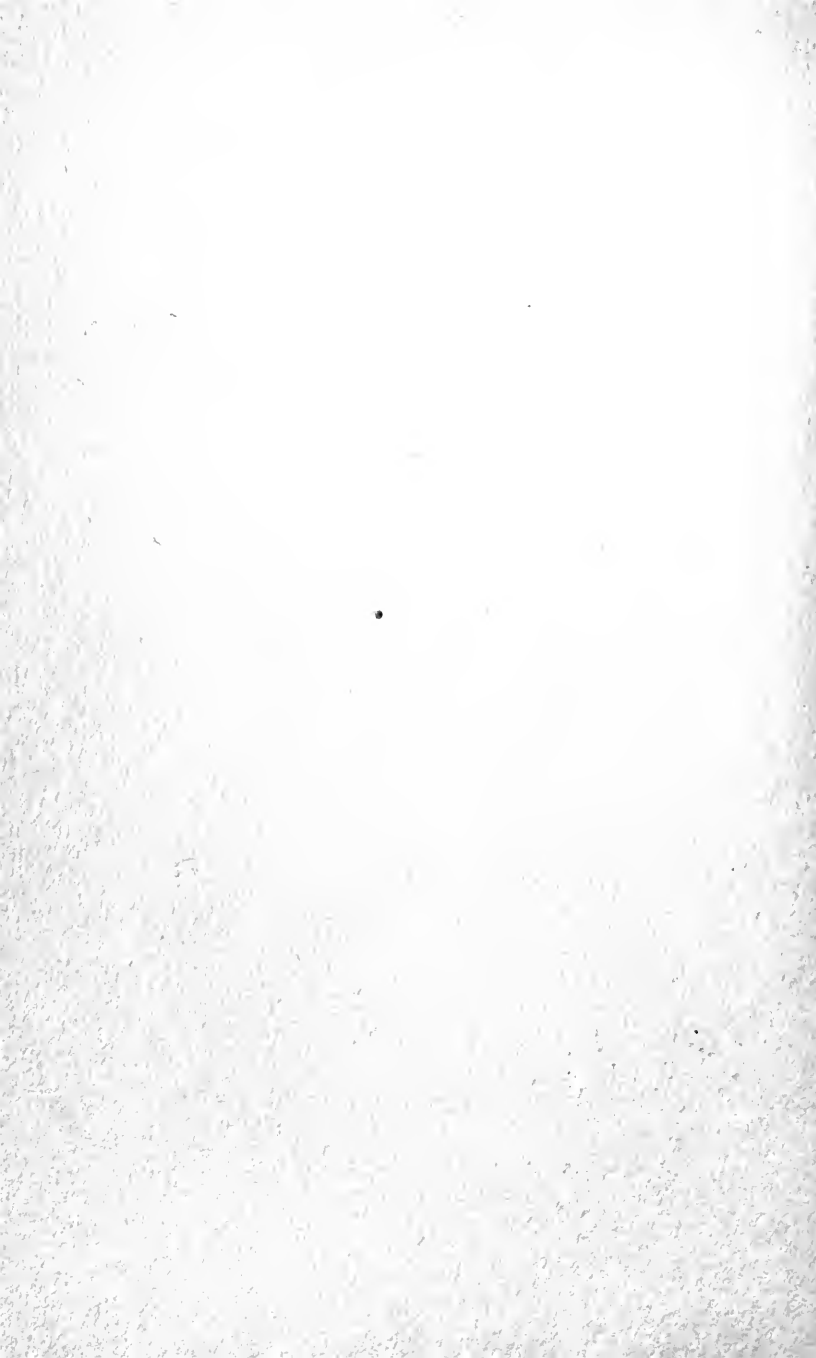
unquestionably the anger of an offended conscience, the holy joy of justice at length avenged, which found expression in this tumult. How easy it is to distort facts, to cook public opinion! I looked on and listened with greater interest than at the most exciting of plays. From the casements, graceful beneath their Gothic gables and bright with window-gardens, imprecations rained down on us. And the gestures of the silhouetted figures standing in the front of these lighted interiors sufficed to show those among us who could not understand Swabian the significance of the volleys of homeric abuse.

I was not in the least humiliated by the hubbub. My condition was one of strange exaltation. I was very sad and yet fascinated—sad at the spectacle of mankind, and yet fascinated at the chance of seeing man as he really is. Tacitus, Machiavelli, Stendhal, Ferrero—not one of these writers had succeeded in giving me so strong an impression of human reality. But I will defer my comments. Thoughts conceived under the spur of hunger and in a sort of physical dementia are not likely to be just. Besides, it is difficult to keep one's head cool when the whole world is crumbling around one. I fear lest I may have to laugh some day at the partiality of this simple and matter-of-fact story, written for some one whom I love, and in which I faithfully desire to use no colours but those of truth.

Of our arrival at the fort I can recall nothing but the memory of a great iron gate which groaned on



its hinges when it was opened, of a few lanterns held by sentinels running hither and thither in the darkness, of a gloomy and nauseous staircase where I stumbled and where my nailed boots made a clatter that aroused distant echoes, and of a casemate, this casemate, with cemented floor, bare, without even straw, its arches sweating damp. I threw myself on the floor, my cheek on my knapsack. My head was throbbing with fever. I spent a sleepless night, not thinking, but a prey to delirium.



*September 16, 1914.*

## FEVER AND LOW SPIRITS

THE casemate is empty. My comrades have gone up to the nine o'clock roll-call. I am still "confined to my room by illness." I am happy to be alone. It is cold. Wrapping my rug closely round me, I lie listening to the bitter wind. I am alone; I am free. It seems to me that the current of life has swept me away to the end of the world, depositing me amid dumb deserts of infinite vastness.

The straw upon which I have been lying for a fortnight is reduced to powder. I roll myself in it as if it were a dust bath for chickens. How thin is my rug! My limbs shake with the cold of fever. Yesterday for a quarter of an hour I dragged myself along in the east court, but I was unable to get as far as the first glacis. When I was coming downstairs on the way back, my legs seemed heavier than hand grenades. I am very cold. Through the upper part of the two screened windows I catch a glimpse of a strip of sky, grey and heavy, crushing down on the slope, on the portcullis on the top of the slope, on the wild rose bush which

breaks the straight line of the portcullis. On the steep slope I see the long grass bending before the gusts.

I am alone. How delightful! What wealth! What a privilege! Here we are never alone.

We sleep, we dress, we eat, we amuse ourselves, we walk about, we hunt for lice, we attend to the calls of nature, we dream, we are filled with indignation, we soften, we caress the dear relics hidden in our knapsacks, we retire into ourselves—we do all this in public.

How well do I understand the phrase of St. Bernard, the phrase of a monk, *O beata solitudo, sola beatitudo!* Sometimes in the morning, when we awaken, this awakening devoid of dignity, full of oaths, when the same voices gabble the same platitudes, in the same eternal access of sterile boredom, makes me feel positively sick. How long will it continue, this life in a herd? It seems to me that the effluvium of the crowd, of the sweat of human cattle, has penetrated into all the interstices of my soul.

No, it is useless; the effort to pull myself together and to become what I was before these days in prison is too much for my poor strength. I am shivering with cold. To throw off this torpor I should need to eat three or four times as much as we are allowed. Alas! the wretched half loaf of the first few days has been reduced to a third of a loaf, for the German authorities are methodically restricting our rations. Even the dumbest of the soldiers, heavy, good-natured fellows, those who never think and consequently waste very little energy,

find it difficult to keep going. Poor mothers, could you but catch a glimpse of your sons, your fine lads, those whom you used to pet so tenderly ! On the slopes and in the dry ditches of the fort you would see them gloomy and slow, with drawn features, with a yellow and dirty skin, almost always crouching on the ground. They look like shades in Purgatory. Are these the youths of France ?

Sergeant Bertrand is the first to come down. Without saying a word, he throws himself on his heap of straw beside me. Then, one behind the other, come dreamily in Sergeant Boude and Guido, my terrible and dear Guido. Soon all the rest of the section enters, a stamping and noisy rout.

Bertrand does not move. Leaning against his knapsack, pipe in mouth—a pipe carved by Boude—he looks straight in front of him. He is in a fine fit of the blues, our “agent de change,” as he is nicknamed by his comrades from Marseilles. If his fiancée could see him thus, his fiancée of Ciotat !

At the end of the room, beneath the windows, two groups are playing cards for pfennig stakes. Beyond them, leaning against the bars, Sabatier, grave and mute like a bonze, is plaiting a horsehair watch-chain. Over there, from every mouth, from all the Bavarian pipes hanging over the players’ stomachs, there mount thick clouds of smoke.

In our corner, spoken of as the “club” by the men of the “fond” (the window end), every one is silent.

Bertrand is in Ciotat. Guido, hunched against the wall, his képi pulled down over his eyes, seems to be turning over thoughts even more disconsolate than those of the *Imitation* or of *Ecclesiastes*. Boude, the good Boude, with the soul of an artist who has lost his way in everyday life, stands up, looking at our trio.

All of a sudden, Bertrand, with a yawn, murmurs, "I would sell my life for a penny."

Boude smiles at his *alter ego*. "For my part, old chap, I brought with me from Marseilles a certain store of philosophy."

"That also gets used up, Sergeant Boude," says Guido, "just as certainly as the cigar that you are smoking. And once your cigar is finished, in these times of dearth, you may find it difficult to get another." Then, turning to me, and lowering his harsh voice: "Richeris," he says, "is the happiest of us all. For him there is nothing but God. If God wills it, he is satisfied; if God does not will it, he is equally satisfied."

Silence for a time.

Then Boude remarks quietly: "I'm going to visit big Boétti. His dreams seem to come true. On the 19th, the night before our capture, he had a red dream. Perhaps last night he may have had a blue one."

"Oh," observes Guido, with a laugh, "I too have, not dreams, but presentiments which come true. The day of Boétti's dream, when we had left Bourdonnaye and were in the marshy wood just before you get to Dieuze,

I said to myself, 'This time it's all up with you, old chap, absolutely all up!' You see, it *is* all up, and for a good long time!"

Then Boude, "Oh, Guido, you see everything in dark colours."

"Quite true, I see everything in dark colours. I leave it to you others to gaze through the rose-tinted window. I keep to the gloomy outlook. Until a day or two ago I had hopes of freedom in October. But since Riou has read us the news, what he calls 'good news,' I hope no longer."

"All the same, I'm going to see Boétti," declares Sergeant Boude, opening the door.

The club relapses into silence. Bertrand dreams. Guido, his faith in original sin thoroughly re-established, meditates upon misfortune and upon human malice.

. . . . .

Oh, how empty and sterile life is. My head swims.

Lambert, who sees that I am shaking with cold, little Lambert, kindly and gentle as a good grandfather, comes and wraps his rug round my shoulders. He gives me a cheerful smile, but says nothing. Returning to his place opposite mine, he devotes himself once more to the study of the civil code. The comrades at the other end of the room noisily continue their game of cards. Sabatier, hard at work, is standing up. It is raining, and the windows have been closed. Young Soulier, stretched at full length on his back, his hands beneath his head, staring at vacancy, whistles

an unending succession of operatic airs, music-hall songs, waltzes, and tangos. I listen. Gradually this flow of sounds wearies me, and ends by exasperating me. What shall I do? Faces of those I love, how in this pit of fever and weariness I endeavour to revive you in memory. Where are you now? If one could only write. Very likely they think we are dead. Has the Ministry of War notified them of our imprisonment? Does the Ministry itself know?

Lambert's rug has made me feel warmer. I have taken from my haversack the manual of French-German conversation the commandant has lent me. I read the dialogue which deals with agricultural life. *Wiese, Wald, Gebüsch, Saatfeld, Ackerfurche, Herde, Mühle, Landhaus*. These humble words seem friendly. I read them again. I murmur them to myself half aloud. Laying the book on my knee, I repeat them slowly by heart.

Is there some magic charm in these simple vocables? Called up by the sounds, images of freshness, so soothing to my fever, come to keep me company. I forget Soulier and his music. I no longer hear the wrangles of the card-players. The misery of being nothing better than a poor sick mole at the bottom of a crypt is gradually effaced from my mind. The magic of words! Yet these words are the words of the enemy. My brain finds relief. My eyes are caressed by pure colours. My ears are delighted with the supple cadences of melodies which recall the scent of hay and pastoral quietude. It seems to me that I am in a sun-



kissed village. In front of the pillared porch of the white church, dazzling white against the limpid blue sky, apple-cheeked girls are playing games. How charming is the aspect of their flaxen plaits against their mauve aprons! How graceful their movements! How angelic the clear ring of their voices! They smile in a comradely way as they look at me. But you are the daughters of the enemy, little sisters singing so sweetly, little sisters whom I love. . . .

September 20, 1914.

## DINNER

IT is exactly a month since we were taken prisoner. Here is the great event of this day of jubilee. It is a culinary event. None but the famished could appreciate it.

I dressed hastily, for I had to be upon the upper slopes at seven o'clock. I had an appointment with a peasant woman, small, thin, with scanty hair, who comes here from time to time to cut the grass. Yesterday she brought me two pounds of sugar. The price was sixty pfennig. I gave her a mark, telling her to keep the change for her two girls. These latter, working bare foot in the damp grass, rewarded me with a profusion of reiterated *Danke schön*, and I had said to myself that they were good folk. Acting on this impression, I commissioned them to buy chocolate to the value of three marks, to be delivered next day at seven o'clock. *Morgen früh, sieben Uhr*. This matter having been settled, I took possession of the wheelbarrow, heavy with damp grass, and, as fast as I could, followed by the three breathless Bavarians, I trundled

my load as far as the guardhouse, nearly slipping a dozen times on the smooth slopes.

Here I am then at seven o'clock to keep the appointment. From this spot there is a view over the entire fort and the huge plain of Ingolstadt. A thin haze limits the horizon. White vapours rise from the Danube. Some factory chimneys behind the town are slowly vomiting their black plumes straight up into the foggy sky. Not a stir in the air. The houses on the plain have a liliputian aspect, seeming lost in the immensity.

There was no one in the upper courts, no one on the slopes. How pleasant it was in this damp solitude. Church bells in the neighbouring villages were ringing for mass. It was raining steadily—a gentle, quiet rain. I took shelter beneath a parapet and waited. Close at hand a poor little acacia was softly dripping. Since I left for the war, this was the first time I had begun the day quite alone. The "Our Father" mounted to my lips. I prayed for France, for all the soldiers of the *Völkerkrieg*. I prayed for my own dear ones . . . God, France, Andrée. . . .

Still the woman did not come. My coat was drenched. I was hungry. I made up my mind to abandon my fruitless errand.

In the casemate it was just like any other morning. Each one of us pushes back against the wall the truss of straw which the previous night he had spread out to make his bed, arranging it to form a rectangle, and covering it with a Bavarian rug. Thus, round

the "square" we have two rows of low couches, greyish brown in colour, provided by way of cushions with our knapsacks padded with our French rugs. The two chambermaids—to-day they are Sabatier and Ancey—sweep the floor and trim the lamp. When the work is finished our casemate looks almost coquettish.

Now Guido returns from mass. Standing silent in the draughty doorway, he smokes his first cigarette. I instantly perceive that he has an idea, and ask for information. He thinks of nothing less than commemorating the melancholy jubilee of our capture by a cup of chocolate. A great thought, but difficult to realize! I hesitate. But Guido, egged on by hunger, is resolute. Knowing that I am on good terms with the kitchen, without further discussion he gives me a mess-tin and a few sticks of Suchard, saying, "You can manage it all right." Doubtfully I make my way to the *Küche*. I open the door. A cloud of steam and smoke rushes out, enwraps me, and almost chokes me. In this fog I knock up against a Norman from the Auge valley—"Marie, the scullerymaid." Without explanation I hand over what I am carrying. "That's all right!" he says. I return to the casemate. "All well?" asks Guido. "All well," I answer. In a few minutes Marie, alias Auguste, appears. He has the mien of a conspirator! Beneath his stained and greasy tunic he conceals as well as he can the hot vessel. With a secret air he says: "Here it is!" "Bravo!" I exclaim. But can this be my mess-tin? It is quite black, like the bottom of a cooking pot. The tin has

melted and run into warty drops half-way up. Yes, it is really my mess-tin ; but what a baptism of fire it must have experienced ! Never mind. In a trice Guido makes a cunning hole in the straw to keep it hot and to conceal the windfall. Hurrah ! everything is ready.

In the casemate, stretched out on our blankets, we all await the dinner-hour.

"Room 17 !" comes the cry from without. We leap to our feet. Two by two, as is the custom in German barracks, we make our way to the kitchen—a long procession of individuals who chatter impatiently in the dark and evil-smelling passages. When we reach the happy door we are arrested by the order, "Halt." We have to wait until those of room 16 have been served and dismissed. Now comes the moment. "Seventeen, enter !" orders Dutrex. We defile in front of the cauldron, and each man in turn holds out his bowl to the cook. This last, Davit, an Angevin, wearied of doing the same thing five hundred times in succession, handles the great ladle mechanically, absorbed in his own thoughts. His arms and shoulders are bare, and one cannot doubt that he has the torso of the Farnese Hercules.

One by one, hastily and yet cautiously, we return to the casemate. Reclining in Roman fashion, seated or squatting, we crumble into the clear liquid, faintly sweetened, a little of our rye and barley bread, of the consistency of putty, and forming a pappy mass in the soup. The silence is religious. Eating is a solemn

function in these days of scarcity. For a lengthy interval nothing is to be heard in the "square" but the rattling of spoons upon tin.

In our corner, where two friends sitting very close together sip steaming chocolate, the fervour is even greater than among those who are taking what we good-humouredly speak of as "café-au-lait." Our mothers would consider our brew extremely crude. No milk! No sugar! But the palate of a prisoner of war differs from that of a pampered child. Bending over our joint mess-tin, Guido and I are silently and sadly happy. Poor joys of the famished, how one makes the most of you with a greedy and simple soul!

*September 21, 1914.*

## FONTAINEBLEAU

YOU remember that Andromache, made captive when Troy fell and allotted to Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles, rebaptized with Trojan names the streams and the hills of the Epirot capital, adorning the gloomy present with glorious memories. As at Troy, she had her Scamander. In this way, on clear nights, when she walked beside the river in the solitary fever of insomnia, it was sometimes possible for her to forget Neoptolemus and the hatred of the Greeks, and to dream of herself still living beside Hector as queen, wife, and happy mother.

All prisoners are alike, be they epic heroines or soldiers of the third republic. I, too, have my Scamander in Epirus.

On the slopes of the fort there are a few poor trees. I do not know how they manage to grow there, for very thin is the layer of grass-clad earth which covers the cemented arches. The rain runs off as from a tiled roof, and the weakest sun scorches the humus. Nevertheless, on the northern spur there is a squad of small

acacias with two or three stunted poplars, sheltering beneath their scanty shade a humble growth of mosses, dwarf gentians, scabiouses, and thyme.

When the *réveillé* sounds, before the fort is overrun by the other prisoners, I visit this little "grove." The habit, somewhat undisciplined, is of recent growth. I have known my Thebaïd for two days only ; I am there for the third time this morning to revive my memories, not of Ilium, but of Fontainebleau.

Fontainebleau !

Do you remember last May, during the week when the great poplars of the Allée Sully were scattering their down on the water of the pond ? There was some of it in your hair the morning when I spoke to you. You looked straight in front of you, as in a vision. You were walking without saying a word, bending backwards, restraining the impatience of the unleashed Katia and Douchka.

In the evening we walked together on the fringe of the forest. The night was warm and fine, and the petals rained gently on us as we went. Our acacias were in flower. We looked at the moon through the slender network formed by their white clusters.

My poor Fontainebleau of Ingolstadt !



*September 22, 1914.*

## AN OLD CAMPAIGNER

THERE are more than a thousand of them squatting on the grass. The sun rages down on this quadrilateral, as big as the Place des Victoires, enclosed by the steep slopes of the scarp. Every one is nodding. The German flag and the Bavarian flag hang inertly along their twin staves. This frippery has been hoisted to celebrate the taking of —. There is not a breath of wind. The heat is stifling. Sentinels pace to and fro. What is going on behind the forbidden slopes? Above the parapets crowned with flowers we can see nothing but the sky—a wide sky, barely blue. Some prisoners are chatting as they sit on a pyramid of grenades.

“How short our campaign was!” exclaims Sergeant Foch of the 10th Chasseurs, a fine fellow who seems modelled in bronze. His dark, golden-speckled eyes seem to devour you. He speaks harshly, and one feels that his wrath is intense. He spits out his phrases, with long intervals of silence.

“And all this happened through an idiot who led

us straight to Raon-l'Etape, a regular Boche ambush! . . .

"As for me, tonnerre de Dieu, I could not help thinking of our captain. Captain B.! He was a soldier, if you like—first man of his year in the Ecole de Guerre, certain to become a general. One day he showed us the photo of his children, seven children, all in a row. He had tears in his eyes. He was a man! He could do what he liked with us. He was brave and prudent, and we had nothing to do but to follow where he led. One felt safe with him. There was a man who knew how to take care of his company.

"I wish you'd seen what happened at Vallerystal! Such a rain of shells we had there. I counted five hundred on my own section alone. I lost my two chums there. One of them came from my own village, and he and I were like brothers—always together. All of a sudden there came a pig of a melinite shell. There was a hell of a noise and a lot of smoke. I was knocked out of time, bowled over and over. Then I got up and dusted myself. Absolutely unhurt! Oh, how that black smoke stank! And on either side of me my two chums, blown to bits, their guts bulging out all over the place. Cré nom de nom! My knapsack did me good service that time! It stopped a shell splinter which set the collar of my coat on fire behind. Just look.

"While this was going on, what do you think our captain was doing? He was walking quietly

up and down, pipe in mouth, in front of our rifles.

“‘Better lie down, captain,’ we said to him.

“‘What’s the use? One’s just as likely to be hit lying down as standing.’

“By the evening he had a wound in the head and a torn biceps. Do you think he left us on that account? His wounds were temporarily dressed.

“‘You must go to the field hospital,’ said the surgeon. But he did not go! There’s a fellow for you. If they were all like this B. . . .”

“Did it do well, your section?” asked Piétri, a red-haired sergeant-major, sturdy, with bloodshot eyes, a Corsican with the trick of staring you in the face, seeming to listen with his eyes, greedily, like a deaf man.

“Did they do well? I believe you! My reservists were splendid. ‘The beasts!’ they cried. They were spoiling for the fight; they clenched their fists. The 10th battalion was proverbial. ‘The men at Provençères are devils,’ said the Boches; it was we.

“At the start it was like playing at soldiers. The Uhlans were coming on in little groups, their gloves spotless with pipeclay, wheeling to right and to left, as if on parade. Bram! Bram! Down goes one of them. The others perform a fantasia of retreat. We pursue. They dismount. I say to my men: ‘Lie down!’ Not a bit of it! They kneel to take better aim. ‘Fire!’ A lieutenant is killed; there are six dead or wounded. Another time, four Uhlans are

trotting quietly along the road, as if on scouting duty. 'Fire!' Ten shots: patrol gone! Yes, it was funny at first. One might have imagined oneself at the summer manœuvres. But from the 10th to the 25th, oh Lord! Nothing but artillery fire. It rained! It rained, I tell you!"

"Did you kill any Boches yourself?" asks big Corporal Durupt, compared in the 2nd to a buffalo's head on a pikestaff. "In my section at Mesnil, near Senones, I handed my rifle to the bugler, a record shot. In a quarter of an hour, at two hundred yards, he brought down ten."

"I did my share," answers Foch. "But the shot of which I am proudest was one which I fired at twelve hundred yards, just for a lark, at a Uhlan patrol. There were three of them; I bowled one of them over. But I will tell you about a shot of which my old comrade Kaiser was especially proud. An Alsatian like myself. I always gave him his orders in German. I don't know if he's still alive. I have not seen him since August 25th, when we were under machine gun fire in Bertrichamps wood.

"In my section we had one odd sort of beast who was always in a blue funk. I kept him by my side as I led my section. The captain says to me: 'Foch, see if you can't stop this machine gun which is worrying us.' Off we go, and soon the bullets are flying thickly. I meet an old territorial. He has his handkerchief pressed to a bleeding wound. I want to dress it for him. 'No, no,' he says, 'don't bother

about me. Go ahead with your brave fellows!' All at once my trembler falls down, crying out:

"'Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!'

"'Are you wounded?'

"'No, a sprain!'

"'Don't you try to gammon me; up with you!' He gets up; he can walk all right. 'You see,' I tell him, 'I beat God Himself. I've cured you in half a tick.' But now, at two hundred yards, I see the German section with the machine gun. I fire, once, twice; I pick off two of them. Then, close at hand, on the right, appears a bunch of Germans. The devil! I call Kaiser, who is acting as my orderly. A Boche advances on him. 'Look out!' I cry. The Boche shoulders his rifle and fires. Down goes Kaiser. The Boche advances, but Kaiser is only shamming dead. Suddenly he rises on his knee. Bram! Head over heels goes the other, and Kaiser hurls himself on the Boche. 'I've got him all right,' he shouts, as pleased as Punch.

"The German squad retreats. My section sends them some parting shots. Two wounded Germans come to us, and I dress their wounds. One of them wants to kiss me, but I'm not having any.

"I say to my funker, 'Get behind that little ridge. You will be close to me.' I have hardly spoken when he begins to bleat: 'Wounded! I am wounded! I've been shot in my behind. Let's escape!' Next minute, 'Mon Dieu! hit again! Let's escape!' Two bullets in his behind; oh dear! He did not know what to

do with himself; he had not enough hands to stop the holes. He let go of one leg in order to seize the other. We who looked on were screaming with laughter. I've never laughed so much in my life. And all this was under fire! Girard was laughing with the rest. Then, suddenly, 'I am hit,' he says; 'lend a hand!'—'You must wait a moment, old boy; the fire is too hot.' The blood was pouring from his wound, making a lather like soapsuds. Two minutes later the bugle sounds 'Cease firing.' But they don't want to cease firing. They simply will not stop. I have to get up and shout at them, to brandish my arms. At length they assemble around me. And here is my funkier, who gets up quite easily, notwithstanding the two bullets in his behind. The firing continued from the German side, and the leaves were falling on us from the trees, for the aim was too high. We were able to withdraw with our eight wounded.

"Ah, it was a fine time, but oh, how tired I was! Had it not been for — I should have gone through the war till the last shot was fired. I no longer gave a thought to my wife or my children."

*September 23, 1914.*

## I HAVE A TABLE

THE useful furniture of our casemate consists of the following articles: a ewer, a dish, and a lamp. I say "the useful furniture," for we have also an imposing iron stove, some heavy bars of iron to barricade the doors and windows, and two pieces of sheet iron about half an inch thick. But there is no table. There was one at first, but they took it away from us to furnish the chapel, where it serves as altar. As for chairs, benches, stools, there is nothing of the sort. Consequently a man who wishes to write, and who has never written except seated at a table, is not likely to feel thoroughly at home in casemate 17.

First I made myself a study out in the open, in a corner of the east court, on the steps of a little cement stairway in the slopes. I got some fine headaches there, sitting for hours in the sun without noticing it. But rainy weather having set in, it became necessary to seek shelter.

It is at this point that Dutrex intervenes in my

prison life—Corporal Dutrex, of martial and elegant figure, a strange compound of the ingratiating characteristics of childhood and the energy of manhood. At Bièvre, in Belgium, when the village of Messin was burning, and when under the fire of machine guns our soldiers were effacing themselves in the furrows, Dutrex, ammunition bag on shoulder and cigarette in mouth, walked unconcernedly from one rifleman to another distributing packets of cartridges.

Arriving here with the first convoy on August 27th, his knowledge of German immediately led to his selection as interpreter to the commandant. By degrees he has become Major von Stengel's right-hand man. I noticed the young fellow from the first. He is blond, with a long, fine moustache, with hair cut en brosse, thin, very erect. I remember that I felt a secret joy when I discovered that this simple corporal of the —th occupied so important a position in the fort. It was pleasing that the German authorities should see France through the medium of this particular Frenchman. Too often have I had the misfortune to study the deficiencies of the official hierarchy, and the unanticipated revenge now taken by the natural hierarchy was agreeable to my reason.

To Dutrex, then, one wet and gloomy morning, in quest of shelter for my pen, I explained my difficulties. He knew my *Ecoutes*, and we had been friends from the first. At noon he handed me the key of the double casemate, No. 55.

With the permission of the commandant he has



established a store here. From nine to ten daily, soap, slippers, brushes, blacking, string, and other little necessities, are sold at cost price.

In this heroic place, a real ice-house, with walls of formidable thickness and screened windows, I spent a long afternoon. I fell ill at once in consequence. That very evening when I returned to No. 17 I was shaking with fever. It cost me a week on the straw. But I bear no grudge against No. 55. It secured me the exquisite luxury of a few hours' isolation. I shall always think kindly of its strong and cold arches, of its chains for moving the garrison-guns, and of its sepulchral atmosphere, faintly perfumed with haberdashery. But I shall not renew my acquaintance with it, for I learn that the occupants of No. 70, who were being eaten alive by lice, have been transferred to 55. I commiserate them for having to make their choice between lice and rheumatism! As for Dutrex, his soap and other wares have been removed to No. 72, where the sun never enters.

I am now able to work in a warm and dry place, for yesterday, as honorary minister without portfolio, I entered what is spoken of as "the French governing body" of the fort.

Do you think these vain honours? Not at all, for they provide me with a table. To have table and lamp of one's own, with many hours all to oneself for observation and reflection! In my view, free time is preferable to money. "Time is money," say the English. I would rather say "Money is time." It seems to me that the only object of working is to secure leisure.

## 82 THE DIARY OF A FRENCH PRIVATE

The man within us is formed by leisure. Work produces money, money produces leisure, and leisure produces more work—but this last is noble, lofty, and disinterested work, the true work of humanity. With me it is an article of faith that the true work of humanity is the work of leisure. Thank goodness I have now a little leisure and solitude.

My solitude, a very precarious one, is a kitchen. You must not laugh.

Near the door of the huge room is the region of the cooking stoves, encumbered, filled with iron and smoke, under the care of Bouquet, the "chef," a delicate and gentle lad from Quercy. But beyond this plutonic zone you enter a spacious quadrilateral, which the cooks usually speak of as the "salon." Two large windows looking to the south flood the place with light. It is fairly clean. The cemented floor is flushed down with water after the vegetables have been prepared, after the serving of each of the three meals, and, speaking generally, whenever there has been much coming and going. At the further end of this kitchen, between the two windows, there stands a table, a little deal table, *the* table. M. Prudhomme would say: "This table, it is the heart of Fort Orff." It is here, in fact, that is established, in almost continuous sitting (upon three deal stools), our ministerial council. Here we plan reforms. Here we elaborate details of organization. Here is regulated the entire internal life of the colony. It is here, finally, that by means of various stratagems we learn the news from outside.

This table, or to be precise, the left side of this table, is now mine. The deep mouth of the sink yawns just behind my stool on the floor level. As I work, my left arm touches the window-sill, on which I place my pipe, my mess-tin, my papers, and your photograph. Such is my kingdom. Here I read, write, and dream. Here thrice daily when meals are served I watch my brothers in captivity file by. Here I listen, and here I observe. Notwithstanding the buzz of talk, the trampling of those at work, and the smoke from the fire, I delight in this corner close to the cooking stoves. Upon our scanty regimen I have become as chilly as a cat. Besides, where else could I work?

Thus my life is divided between my "Fontainebleau of the slopes," my stool in kitchen No. 22, and casemate 17. For I continue to sleep on my old heap of straw. It is nothing more than a derisory bed of dust, but I am more comfortable there than I was the first night. I am glad to say that my back is now covered with callus; my nose has become hardened; even my ears during the night are less sensitive than they were at first to the noises, now strident, now guttural, of the sleepers. At the outset, suffering from insomnia, I passed hour after hour, sickened by this frogs' chorus. I longed to run away from it. I summoned sleep with all my might. Smile if you like, but I feel my faith in the human soul weaken when I contemplate a sleeping man whose mouth gapes and who snores like a great hog. The horrible stench which tainted the damp breeze at Moncourt, Lagarde, and Kerprich, rising from

the putrefying corpses of men and beasts, was to my mind less strongly insistent of the animal relationships of man than is the slow, irregular rhythm, the dull and undignified noise, of snoring. But one gets used to everything. I have become accustomed to the snoring and to the yet more disagreeable incidents of our too intimate association. I hardly notice the foul smell of drains which permeates the passages of our ant-hill, and which made me feel positively faint on the evening of our arrival. Man is so greedy for happiness that he speedily becomes immunized against the toxin of his daily troubles. Day by day I am less keenly conscious of my miseries. At night, on my heap of dust, I often meditate upon this marvellous characteristic of our nature. Towards eleven, passing into a condition of gentle melancholy, I manage to get off to sleep between Sergeant Bertrand on one side, dreaming love dreams, and my terrible and dear Guido on the other—Guido, a prey to pessimism and insomnia, whose cigarette continues to glow in the darkness.

*September 26, 1914.*

## WE KILL THEIR HOPES

THINGS are going badly with the Germans. Our guards may keep their mouths as tightly shut as they please, and may deprive us of newspapers, but despite our isolation we feel that things are going well for France.

There was a splendid sunrise. When I went out to greet you and the dawn upon our acacia slope, the cold was dry and sharp. The air had an agreeable aroma of fresh earth. It was a pleasure to let the eyes dwell upon the play of morning light across the open country. The cord on the flagstaff, now bearing no flag, shook in the wind and made a clicking sound as it struck the wood. For a moment from underground there came the sound of the bell rung at the elevation, a gentle, calm, and mysterious sound. It was the hour when Richeris and Guido are accustomed to serve mass for one another.

In the kitchen I found Corporal Durupt at breakfast. He stood with his back to the fire, poised askew on his heron's legs, looking, as usual, as long and thin as

a hop-pole. The co-minister of Dutrex had toasted a slice of black bread sprinkled with aniseed (bread which he detests), and, rocking to and fro a little, was moistening it in his bowl. Around him the great iron cauldrons, which had been taken down from the stoves ready for the distribution, were steaming like locomotive engines. He was drinking his coffee with a thoughtful air, one which gave him a lofty, conscientious, incorruptible aspect. When he saw me his large and trusty eyes sparkled. I detected a mischievous twinkle behind his glasses.

Instantly he began: "I have *grand'chose* to tell you." He is an Alsatian and has phrases peculiar to himself. In his vocabulary "*grand'chose*" means something of extreme importance. And for Durupt there is but one thing of real importance, and that is the extermination of Prussia.

He hates Germany with a hatred which has been a cult in the Durupt family for generations. He went to school at Mülhausen. He took part with the Alsatian boys in terrible fights with the German boys. Thus, in his case, hatred of the Teuton was in the first instance a suggestion of childhood. But this hatred has become envenomed by experience and mature reflection. At an age when the heart begins to devote itself to the work of life, he was subjected to the forcible, rough, relentless constraint imposed by the foreign master. The daily experience of "Germanization" had filled his kindly nature with gall against everything German.

"At Paris," he says sometimes, "in the restaurants,

in the post-offices, wherever I could, I plagued the life out of all the Boches who came my way!" On the banks of the Brusche, and especially at Saulxures, where the two sides were firing at one another haphazard in the fog, he killed furiously. Now, being a prisoner of war, and having neither rifle nor bayonet, he devotes himself to the endeavour to sow discouragement among the soldiers who guard us, considering that an army contaminated with discouragement is ripe for defeat.

Durupt is a thoroughly upright man. His everyday judgments and his ordinary actions recall the evangel of '48 and the solid bourgeois virtues. He belongs to that undistinguished élite which forms the real backbone of every nation, the élite consisting of those who know how to speak the truth and to live for truth. Above all, he belongs to that France unknown to foreigners (although in it is concealed the secret of our marvellous resurrections), to that moral France which lies ever hidden beneath Gallic and frivolous France, producing, as times change, a St. Louis, a Calvin, a Saint-Cyran, a Pascal, a Lamennais, or a Fallot, men of a single colour, with consciences of iron, terrible to themselves, obedient to the point of heroism, and often scrupulous to the point of disease. Those I have named are generals of the army in which Durupt serves as a private.

He has a great love and admiration for his brother, Jacques Durupt, Goude's antagonist at Brest in the last parliamentary elections, and, during the heroic times

of Marc Sangnier, leader of the Sillonist left in association with Gacmaling and Archambault.

Durupt himself lived on the confines of the Sillonist movement. Like all the readers of *Démocratie* and *Nouvelle Journée*, he has the republic and the Christian faith in his blood.

I esteem our "co-triumvir." I find him a trifle too meticulous for my taste. He shows little interest in the witty and graceful sides of life. He has a tendency to emphasis, and is a little inclined to act the judge. He is fond of giving an exemplary flavour to his actions, and at times plumes himself somewhat when speaking of what he does. But his heart is as clear as crystal, utterly void alike of hypocrisy and malice. His whole life, at home and abroad, even in its most trifling details, is upright, controlled, deliberate.

A certain sympathetic pleasure attended my gradual discovery in this Catholic of the merits and defects characteristic of the Scottish puritan and of the French radical. Moral, practical, ardently patriotic, ingrained with the civic spirit, something of a preacher, without any change in his modes of thought or his personal habits he might well be regarded as a perfect disciple of Christophe Dieterlen, Fallot, or Frommel, and even of Charles Wagner, Paul Doumergue, or Wilfred Monod, the file-leaders in France of reformed Catholicism.

Everywhere, fortunately, men remain men. Protestants have the Catholic spirit and Catholics have the Protestant spirit. Individual psychology laughs



at doctrinal oppositions. Throughout the entire human race, temperaments and characters develop, underground, their indestructible stratifications, regardless of the walls built on the surface by the leaders of men, walls which these leaders, with their imperious will, imagine to be durable.

Durupt devotes to the indulgence of his national hatred the whole of that conscience which his Christianity (quasi-jansenist in type) has produced in him. He hates as a duty. He injures as a duty. How can he injure the Germans now that he is at their mercy? By demoralizing their men! Having an excellent knowledge of German, he has made it his mission at Fort Orff to prove by  $a + b$  to our successive relays of guards—Landwehr men on their way to the frontier, or men wounded in the first onslaught and now returning cured to the firing-line—that Germany is beaten in advance.

He arrived here on August 30th, three days after Dutrex, and the whole of Germany in the fort, from the commissariat captain down to the last *Gemeiner* (the commandant, whose conduct towards us has throughout been a model of courtesy, always excepted), set to work forthwith to din into his ears, "Paris *kaput*"—literally translated, "Paris pulverized." For a whole fortnight this was the refrain. When the quartermaster, an ill-natured beast, stupid and uncouth, came down to the kitchens, his way of saying good-day was to laugh maliciously as he announced a new *kaput*: Verdun *kaput*; Rheims *kaput*; Manonviller

*kaput* ! Even the *Verpflegsoffizier*, Captain Friedrich Wilhelm Weidner, of the Prinz Ludwig regiment, a Nuremberg merchant with a lofty air, very erect, much mustachioed, with frank blue eyes, did not disdain, from time to time, to unfold ostentatiously among the stoves, under the noses of Dutrex and Durupt, copies of the *Nürnbergischer Zeitung* and the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* with headlines screaming victory.

These were their happy days. The gateway leading to the open was black on Sundays with a gaping crowd : townsfolk in their Sunday best, wearing cocks' feathers in their green felt hats ; rich farmers' wives trying to look comfortable in hats ; swarms of children, for the most part barefooted ; peasants in ill-fitting ready-made clothes ; pathetic village dames, clad as in Dürer's pictures, the head covered with a kerchief, a black fichu over the shoulders, a wadded corsage to fill out their figures. All these idlers, looking poverty stricken when compared with those of like class in France, would spend hour after hour staring at the "pantalons rouges," occasionally shouting through the bars their eternal "Paris *kaput*," the cry which had been reiterated from Dieuze to Strasburg, from Stuttgart to Ingolstadt, and with which our ears had been ringing since our capture.

This foolish jubilation exasperated Durupt. He kept quiet about it for some days. At length, however, having recovered his spirits, he threw himself heart and soul into the task of keeping up our hopes.

"It is absolutely impossible that we can be beaten," he

would say to the preachers of evil. "Agreed, their advance guards are at Rheims, Meaux, and Compiègne. But does this mean that Paris has been taken? What about the naval guns with which the Government has filled the forts? Make your minds easy; they will lose much time and much blood before they will plant their standard on the Place de la Concorde! Let us suppose the worst. Let us suppose that Paris has fallen. Does that finish the matter? Remember Chanzy's plan. In his view, the strategic bastion of France is not Paris but the Massif Central, the Auvergne and Cévennes mountains. Let them make their way, then, to Clermont-Ferrand and Aurillac! Besides, we are not fighting single-handed. The Russian waterspout is getting ready, and will soon break over them; it will make short work of their five poor army corps. Its waters will dash on to Berlin. The floods will chase their navy out of the Kiel Canal, will force it into the North Sea—where the English dreadnoughts are awaiting it, and will swallow it at one gulp!"

The least enthusiastic among the prisoners were enraptured at these speeches. Sometimes a voice would be heard saying, "Even so, we shall be here till the spring!" To which Durupt would peremptorily reply: "All Saints' Day will find us at home! I know Germany as I know the palm of my hand. The country is penniless. Moreover, it is not with France alone, this time, that Germany has to do; she has to fight France, Belgium, England, and Russia—that

ocean of humanity. You must be mad, I tell you, if you do not feel that Germany is going to be wiped out!"

In these surroundings, Durupt is the man with a duty, a mission. Though he is a prisoner, every hour is fully occupied, each moment has its allotted task. His life is governed by a single rule: "Every day in which we fail to enlarge our own hopes and to spread discouragement among the Germans is a day lost." Consequently, the essential matter for him is to secure news.

The instant he has finished his supervision of the distribution of our meals and his work in casemate 16, off he goes on the hunt. He accosts Max, the canteen-keeper, the mightiest beer-drinker on the Upper Danube, a light-hearted soldier, florid, paunchy, so rough that he laughs when he tells you that in the Vosges a French shrapnel has just taken off his brother's arm, and yet, though rough, a good fellow. It is from him that Durupt learns the gossip in the *Wirtschaften* of Hepperg, Lenting, Kösching, Wegstätten, Oberhaumstadt—in a word, in all the village taverns within reach of the fort, both on the hills and in the plain. Having finished with Max, he proceeds to pump the guard.

Here his reception is rather cold, for he is a poor diplomatist, and shows too plainly to these men of the Landwehr that at bottom he is their hereditary enemy. Still, he has a talk in the guardroom, smokes a cigar, and drinks a glass of beer with the men,

exchanging *Prosits*. Sometimes he sees on the table, amid the beer-jugs and other debris of the meal, a newspaper which they have forgotten to put away when the Frenchman came in. My Durupt pounces upon it and stuffs it into his pocket. He strides across the bridge, hurries down the staircase, and bursts into the kitchen, breathless and radiant, with the air of a victorious athlete or a hero who has saved the republic, and brandishes his paper as if it were a flag taken from the enemy. Now he reads it, translates and comments, with exclamations of joy or of rage at the passages which delight or infuriate him. He actually talks, argues, and fights with this newspaper; he regards it as a flesh and blood Bavarian who is trying to deceive him, and with whom he has to join issue. Woe to the Bavarian if he does not admit defeat, or at least disquietude, for he will then learn to what lengths Durupt can go in his anger!

Never shall I forget these readings of the *Ingolstädter Zeitung*. If I am ever tempted to doubt that the press exercises a terrible power, that its influence upon the public resembles that of a shell bursting in a cavalry square, I shall call to mind certain hours of imprisonment here, passed round our table, Durupt reading aloud, Dutrex and I sketching maps to clarify the news, while leaning over our shoulders, anxiously following us, are Paix, Scherrer, Badoy, Noverraz, Donel, Lagier, and a few others. When we break up in the evening we know what will be the public sentiment next day. According as Durupt is able to sing

a triumphal pæan, or, on the other hand, the evidence of misfortune is overwhelming, will our thousand comrades be light-hearted or sad, will hope or despair permeate the fort from this centre, from this table, from the newspaper on this table, from the group of men who sit round it evening after evening.

Sometimes Durupt, returning to the kitchen excited by the chase, is pulled up by the notice I have posted for the protection of my work: "Please do not speak to me." He then sits down beside me without saying a word and unfolds the newspaper he has got hold of. Elbows on table, head in hands, his whole body bent eagerly forward, Claudel would say he is engaged on the "ingurgitation" of his paper.

Look at him, dissecting the leading article, heavy fare in which the most trifling details of information are sandwiched between philosophical disquisitions. He turns the fragments over and over as a starving man turns over the contents of a dustbin. He labours to unveil hidden meanings, to detect masked avowals. He displays a truly German patience in securing here and there, *rari nantes in gurgite vasto*, the name of a town, the number of an army corps, or some other shadow of positive information.

Then he brings forth his maps, which are shabby in appearance, worn at the folds, stained by the rain and sweat of his campaign in the Upper Vosges. He takes out his pencil. He marks the places. At length, unable to restrain himself any longer, he feels that he must tell me what has happened. He turns my

protective notice with its face to the wall, and starts upon his commentary.

The splendid thing is that this commentary invariably leads up to the proof of a victory. For him every French retreat is a strategic movement, while every German retreat is a rout. All good news is positively certain; all bad news is a falsehood published to restore the courage of the German populace. Guided by these principles of criticism, he arrives at a certainty of the truth; he then cons it over to himself, gives it a portable form, and hurries off to disseminate it through the fort. He bursts into No. 19, where Merlier, Charlier, and Gautin receive him as an angel of the Lord; into No. 17, where his enthusiasm breaks vainly against the obstinate and disdainful pessimism of Guido; into No. 34, where Brissot and d'Arnoult, two mischievous devils who are equally well acquainted with German and with the beer served out to the guardroom, treat him simply as a gossip. Unfortunately, in the course of his round he will encounter, now the quartermaster, now a *Gefreiter*, now one of the sentinels. Remorselessly he overwhelms them with his news, thus making himself more unpopular with them than before.

Thus he takes ample revenge for the "Paris *kaput*" of the first few days. Dutrex and I chaff him about it, saying: "You're behaving like a Boche in being so regardless of your adversaries' feelings!"

"Poor fellows," he makes answer, "it is obvious that you don't know the Germans. As far as they are

concerned the proverb is absolutely true: 'Oignez vilain, il vous poindra ; poignez vilain, il vous oindra !' " <sup>1</sup>

I was walking the other day with Durupt and Sergeant Foch. We were on the little footpath which runs along the parapet, and opposite to us, across the great ditch, on the road which skirts the outer slopes, there appeared two German women. They were walking slowly, wheeling bicycles, and they looked at us curiously. We mended our gait, for no one likes to look unhappy under the eyes of the enemy.

Durupt spoke to them in German.

"Have you a newspaper?"

"No."

"What's the latest news?"

"Things are going well in France."

"For which side?"

"For ours. Trainloads of wounded are coming back every day."

"Your wounded?"

"Yes."

"In that case, it is for our side that things are going well!"

"Possibly."

These women had such fat bodies and short legs as to produce an impression of caricature. Sergeant Foch, Alsatian and infantry chasseur, has a malicious wit. He was cogitating a joke, but I managed to induce him to suppress it.

<sup>1</sup> Treat a ruffian gently and he will knock you about ; knock a ruffian about and he will fawn upon you.



We walked on slowly, talking across the ditch, and the women said :

"You treat our prisoners badly, and you finish off the wounded !"

"Who told you that ?"

"It's in the papers."

"All your papers lie, and you are stupid enough to believe them. It is just the same with the war news. You are beaten everywhere. It's perfectly clear to any one who can read intelligently. Yet you believe yourselves to be the victors ! The newspapers take their readers to be idiots. Is it possible that they are right ? The real fact is that we are starved here, whilst in France, where people are rich and generous, your prisoners are fed on the fat of the land !"

"It may be so. But it was those rascals of English who caused all the trouble. If only I had them here !" (the larger woman shook her fist). "The English are the apaches of Europe (*die Lumpen Europas*) !"

Thus the conversation began. It must have lasted about half an hour. The conscientious Durupt "sowed discouragement" in the minds of his interlocutors, refusing to leave them until he felt that their confidence in victory had been undermined.

*September 27, 1914.*

## SUNDAY

I HAVE been at work all the morning.

At ten o'clock, Guido came to fetch me for mass. Under his arm he carried the great missal, borrowed from the curé of Lenting, in which he likes me to follow the service. The sermon was delivered by one of his colleagues. It filled me with astonishment, so harsh, so pitiless was its tone, reeking of fire and brimstone, representing God as a cross between a satrap and a bogey. The preacher seemed a veritable priest of Saturn. His firmness of conviction, be it noted, was absolute. But—shades of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Francis of Sales, where were you?

Guido often discusses his faith with me in the evenings, when, before the roll-call, we stroll together on the deserted glacié, just after the stars have come out. He takes great pains to expound to me the beauties of the Catholic liturgy. It is, in very truth, incomparable. For those who can believe in the miracle of the host, nothing in the world can be so touching or so sublime as the daily drama of the mass.

But what a pity that it has to be said in Latin, so that none but those who have had a classical education can appreciate it to the full. This morning, for instance, I doubt if there were three of the comrades able to understand the Epistle and the Gospel of the day. If it is considered essential to retain Latin as a symbol of universalism, why should not the Latin reading be instantly followed by vernacular rendering of these verses of Scripture wherein are contained the essentials of our faith, be it Roman Catholic or Protestant?

Yet how simple and how moving was the ritual, improvised, shortened, of necessity reduced to its elements—altar, candles, incense, vestments. No Saint-Sulpician imagery! Bare walls, rough and white. It was possible to fancy oneself in a catacomb, in the first ages of the church.

Quite recently this armoured keep has been deprived of its four or five ancient guns. There they were at their posts, muzzles in the loopholes, ready at the supreme moment to sweep with their fire the north of the counterscarp beyond the second encircling wall. They had been in this damp crypt for perhaps thirty years, without ever being used. Now they are on their way to the Russian front. The Germans must be hard put to it for guns, to make use of these relics!

The crowd of the faithful, French soldiers and Bavarian *Landwehrleute*, standing indiscriminately, peacefully pressed shoulder to shoulder, served to warm the casemate a trifle. I shivered, none the less,

whilst Boude, with a voice grave and sweet, sang the ample strophes of the *Adoro te* of St. Thomas. At one moment, impressed by the strong and noble simplicity of this sanctuary of exile, I called up in memory the interior of the church attended by the bathers of Trouville. The contrast was so violent that

. . . . .

In the curé of Lenting's missal, I have read several times lately, lying on my heap of straw, the couplets of the *Adoro te*. What an ardent hymn it is! How sublime is its cry of passion! When it was written, the cult of the eucharist was, so to say, novel, and had numerous opponents within the church. Béranger, the Angevin, a species of early Calvin, denied the material transformation of the elements. Christianity took sides about the matter.

It is only periods of combat which are fruitful. To-day the altar is too peaceable. Too many questions are considered closed. I doubt if a St. Thomas or a St. Bonaventura would now vie with one another in love and genius to sing, as sincerely as did these saints of old, the flesh and the blood of Christ in the host.

Mass said, we hastened to the ordinary. It consisted of soup and a morsel of pork. The distribution of the meal lasted until two. Then Dutrex, Durupt, the cooks, and I sat round the ministerial table to dine in our turn. It was late, and we were hungry.

I furnished some cigars, smuggled goods. Dutrex provided tea, likewise smuggled. As there were eight of us and we had but four half-pint mugs, it was necessary to use four enamelled iron bowls—basins belonging to Fort Orff. The tea was lost in the bottom of these; one might have imagined it had been dispensed with a medicine-dropper. But how good it was! With our half-pint mugs and our bowls we clinked three times, drinking to France, to the destruction of autocracy and militarism in Europe, to those at home. Our meagre love-feast had quite a family air. Cooks and “ministers” alike, we all felt that we were truly brothers.

After dinner, Dutrex, Durupt, and I went for a walk. There was a high wind as we strolled along the parapets. In shady corners, I was able to pluck some dwarf gentians, mosses, and lichens. I even discovered a tuft of dwarf heather from which the flowers had almost all fallen. I have arranged this posy in my campaigner’s mug. There it is, beside your portrait. If only we could hope to get away from here before it fades!

Durupt left us to attend vespers, whilst I went on walking with Dutrex. At ordinary times he is a man of extreme reserve, fencing off his intimate soul, and all the more unapproachable in proportion as he becomes gayer; but to-day, as if in spite of himself, he was a little expansive.

There had been a silence, and then he said:

“Just at this hour, coming from his office, my father

has doubtless been greeted by the words, 'Still no news of the little one?' I'm afraid I shall find them greatly aged."

"But, my dear fellow, they'll get young again fast enough when they see you!"

"I have a presentiment," he suddenly exclaimed. "Look out at the view before us, this dead countryside. No smoke rises from Ingolstadt. There is not a soul in the fields. Does not this suggest defeat? Last Sunday there were still some men among the idlers at the gate who came to stare at the French. To-day there were only women and children. All their men are at the front. And this wind from France! I am sure that it is sweeping back their armies. I am confident that just now, when we were drinking our toasts, we were unwittingly celebrating a French victory."

He went on to speak of his family and of his studies. The cold breeze stung our faces. A chill vapour was floating across the melancholy plain, so that it seemed as if all that we looked down upon was covered with mysterious veils of *crêpe*. How sweet it was to me to listen, in exile, to the delicately simple confidences of this son of France.

When I re-entered the "salon," Durupt, back from vespers, was reading the German translation of a novel by Sienkiewicz, *Mit Feuer und Schwert*. He turned towards me with a dazed and yet decisive air: "Old Riou, I have a presentiment of victory!"

*September 28, 1914.*

## THE VICTORY OF THE MARNE

A BATCH of eighty-two convalescent wounded arrived at the fort on the stroke of five. We thought at first that they were ordinary prisoners sent here direct from the last battle. We were already running to meet them on the bridge, eager for trustworthy news, ready to throw a fire of questions at the unexpected messengers across the curtain of Bavarian bayonets. Then we noticed that several of them were limping, while others, though not limping, were leaning upon sticks after the manner of old men, and we perceived that they had all lost the bronzing of trench and camp life. We were disappointed. These white-faced men came from the hospitals of Ingolstadt, and such drafts, as a rule, bring but little news.

While the transfer was being effected, and while the two German non-commissioned officers, the one belonging to the fort and the one belonging to the town, paper and pencil in hand, ticked off their men as sheep are counted at a market, we studied our comrades' appearance. They were not very ragged.

They had almost completely repaired the terrible havoc of battle.

The havoc of battle ! These words have no meaning to a fire-eater past the age for active service who fights his battles among women. He speaks of the beauty of the assault, of the heroism of a bayonet charge. All that his imagination conceives is the richly dressed shop-front of war. It would be different if he knew the reality that lies behind ! One must have been over several battlefields immediately after the fighting in order to understand the meaning of the phrase, "the havoc of battle."

"They throw away their shakos, their muskets, even their colours," writes Victor Hugo. Alas, dropping with fatigue, some of them will even throw away their coats. You see them in shirtsleeves, running across the stubble. The firing gets hotter ; suddenly a shell bursts, and a man is wounded in three places—hit in the back, scratched on the thigh, and deeply torn in the arm. He falls. To make matters worse it begins to rain. The ground soon becomes a slough. The battle passes off into the distance. Rain continues. Night comes. Our man, half drowned, and almost buried in a furrow, no longer hears a sound. He tries to rise, but finds it impossible. He strains his eyes to see something. The effort is useless. He is glued to the ground ; he can see nothing beyond the tuft of grass where his head is resting, nothing unless it be, close at hand, the mist-wraiths which gradually surround him and hide him. In anguish he cries : "Maman, maman !"



He believes himself lost. "Maman!" He screams this with all his might. It is an appeal, a complaint, a prayer. He is in pain. He is parched with thirst. "Maman, maman!"

The stretcher-bearers have heard the cry. "The ambulance!" they shout to reassure him, making a speaking-trumpet of their hands. Here they are with their red lamps knocking against their legs. A red cross man takes our soldier on his back. The wounded man groans. What can be done? They let him groan. On the road is waiting a forage cart with straw on the bottom. It creeks and jolts; it is a bed of torture. It is packed with wounded. The rain never ceases. Our man feels that he is dying of cold, but he has the good luck to faint. The cart reaches a dilapidated farm. Beside the entrance are two lanterns, one white and the other red; it is the field hospital.

As soon as its turn comes the blood-stained bundle is smartly brought in and placed upon a truss of fresh straw. Amid the horrible concert of lamentations the man gradually returns to consciousness. What pain! The chief hospital orderly comes by with his dark-lantern. He examines the newcomer. "Here's another of them hit in the back," he says with a growl. He summons assistance, and two or three men painfully turn the poor devil on to his face.

"Have you the scissors?"

"No, they are in use."

"Have you a knife?"

"Here you are."

Rip, rip. With two slashes the orderly removes the back of the shirt. Rip, rip. He does the same with the rest. But this is sticking to the wound. "Oh, oh," groans the patient. It is finished. The skin is free.

"He has blood-stains on his trousers, too." Rip, rip. "Hullo! what a nasty tear in his thigh." Rip, rip. "Gently—how it sticks!" Half of the trousers, stiff and black with blood, is thrown into the alley way to join the other rags.

At last comes the turn of the shirtsleeve. This is an easier job. Rip, rip.

"Monsieur le Major."

"Yes," answers the medical officer, at work at the other end of the barn. "Have you exposed the wounds?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Major."

Oh yes, they are fully exposed. So is the wounded man! He had nothing on when he was brought in beyond a shirt and trousers. Now his shirt lacks an arm and most of the back, while his trousers have but one leg! Poor devils, whom the panic of retreat and the orderly's knife have reduced to this condition. Such men as these may well speak of "havoc."

And if the field hospital is in the hands of the enemy, the patients in this condition will have to endure two or three days of railway travelling, slowly jolted along in the foreigner's cattle trucks.

Just now I was talking about our new comrades.

They had known the extremity of wretchedness. Two or three weeks had passed. There they were, behind the curtain of Bavarian bayonets, standing on their own feet, their clothing a little worn; but they were full of pluck, and, considering everything, almost gay. Doubtless a Frenchman might see reason for surprise at their equipment, for this was somewhat unusual. But no German could find anything to laugh at; he could not but feel that he was looking at true French soldiers. I was grateful to our comrades for the spirit and ingenuity which had enabled them, by the use of chance expedients, to assume a military, a French aspect, under the eyes of the enemy. In certain conditions, coquetry is heroic.

Dominating the troop was a gigantic *chasseur d'Afrique* whose appearance drew the most indolent in the fort to look at him. Seen close at hand, he was simply a foot soldier of the 146th, from Toul, who had cut himself a *chéchia* [elongated fez] out of a red trouser-leg. Beside him was a dragoon, sporting an extremely elegant police-cap manufactured from the same cloth. A *chasseur alpin* partially concealed beneath his ample cloak a perfectly new pair of greenish trousers, bought from a sutler through the hospital gate at Ingolstadt. A colonial infantryman of the 6th, from Tarare, who had received a horrible wound in the shoulder, had a linesman's coat and an artilleryman's trousers. It was only his red-anchored *képi*, saved from the general wreck, which revealed him to be a marine. I regret to say that some of our warriors wore peaceful-looking

civilian caps of grey cloth which would have given an unsoldierly appearance to Ney himself.

Nevertheless, this debris of broken regiments, rigged out at haphazard as it arrived from the battlefield, soiled, torn, and deplorable odds and ends collected from the abandoned slaughter-houses and thrown pell-mell into transport wagons, had now an appearance that was far from being filthy or wretched. Besides, the men were smiling.

On the other hand, the soldiers who come here direct from the battlefield are far from smiling! Their brains are filled with terrible visions. They anticipate cunning tortures. They are astonished that their throats have not yet been cut. I was struck by their aspect as of hunted beasts when the gate of the fort was opened wide to admit them.

I call to mind one of my comrades, an officer in the medical service. His red cross armlet protected him. Upon the roof of the field hospital he had with his own hands conspicuously unfurled the great neutral flag. I remember the circumstances perfectly. The cannonade had ceased. Our ears, which for three successive hours had been deafened by an infernal noise, were astonished by this sudden, palpitating, and immense silence. The men of our regiment, sent forward on a bayonet charge across the open, had been mowed down in masses. The survivors retreated in headless, incoherent, almost indifferent groups. While this was in progress I saw some of the men pause, quietly strike the plum-trees with their rifles, fill their

mouths and their pockets with the unripe fruit, and continue on their way with the same careless gait as if at manœuvres. But the Prussians were in hot pursuit. We saw them advancing in regular order, close at hand, at first in open formation, and subsequently by sections. They halted, fired, bounded forward, fired again. Repeatedly they fired upon our field hospital, where the flood of bleeding flesh overflowed into the little garden behind the house. Dzing, dzing. Their bullets canoned among our utensils, broke off limbs from the little fruit trees shading our wounded, and sometimes covered the poor hungry fellows with plum branches.

The whole of our staff was at work, and the work was overwhelming, utterly disproportionate to the equipment and the personnel. Yet it was all the better, for excessive labour blinds us to danger. When the body is utterly exhausted, this reacts upon the mind, which becomes dull and insensible, so that imagination is paralysed. No doubt when, all of a sudden, quite close to your ears, a passing bullet utters its sharp but gentle flute-like note, the mind starts and rears like a frightened horse. It is invaded by a flow of precise and positive thoughts of self-preservation. But this is for a moment only. The act upon which you are engaged is mechanically finished, and there you are at your post, just as before. Heroism? The word is too lofty. It is better to say simply that action is a vice which holds the mind in its powerful grip and prevents reflection. In actual warfare, all ordinary men are

worth pretty much the same ; all are, as circumstances vary, equally cowardly or equally courageous. But the leaders are different. I am now of opinion that the true leaders, those to whose troops panic is unknown, are those who never abandon their men's minds to themselves even for a moment, who keep these minds permanently occupied, concentrated upon the immediate vision of some simple and direct action which has to be performed.

"There's no end to them," said the hospital orderlies. And indeed there seemed no end to them. The wounded streamed in from all directions, in Indian file, in groups, or in pairs helping one another along. When the house was full we did not know where to put them. For the time being we packed them together outside, wherever there was a patch of shade. Poor lads! already exhausted with hunger, fatigue, and loss of blood, they had used up the last ounce of energy in making for our flag. "Orderly," they would say when reaching the door, "do what you can for me!" Then, out of breath, they would slowly sink to the ground, with little cries like those of a sick child. More than one of us, at sight of this, had to wipe his eyes furtively.

The firing had ceased. All at once some one cried : "There they are!" A Prussian cyclist had in fact ridden by the gate, followed by the first patrol. They did no more than glance at the field hospital in passing. At this moment I was about to open the surgical instrument wagon to get something I needed. While we were all so busy, the officer of whom I have spoken

above was standing two paces from me, his arms hanging by his sides. When he heard the words "There they are," he was dumbfounded. The brown hairs of his thin beard were bristling on his pale skin. His cheeks were blanched ; he stared at vacancy. He swayed upon his little legs. Having his back towards the gate he had seen nothing. But he had heard the words, "There they are." He knew that he was about to be seized, and he thought that his last hour had come. He stood for two or three seconds, mute, pale, as if thunderstruck. Then, talking to himself, he said tonelessly, "They'll slit all our throats !"

. . . . .

While the German *Feldwebel*, with Dutrex at his elbow, conducts the convalescents to their rooms, section by section, I return to the "salon," and bury myself in my papers. All at once the door is noisily opened, and Dutrex, with his usual shortness of manner, insistently martial, in a state of cheerful exhilaration, ushers in a tiny man, corporal of the 146th of Toul. Shepherding, hustling, dominating with his great blustering voice, he pushes the stranger into my arms.

"Here's a man for you !" I shake the little corporal's hand. The first downy growth of beard is appearing on his face. The *juventa intonsa* of Euryalus. He has the callow air of a candidate for university honours. With thoughtful eyes, quietly obstinate behind glasses, he resembles my friend Bonifas.

Durupt arrives. Several others, attracted to the spot,

form a circle round us. As one man, the cooks desert the "plutonic region"; Davit, the Hercules, and the painstaking Devèse seat themselves unceremoniously upon the ministerial table.

"Friend," begins Dutrex, "we've brought you here before Riou because you look intelligent, restrained, judicious. Riou insists upon trustworthy news. Don't exaggerate when you are talking to him. If you are a romancer, clear out!"

The little corporal smiles. I open the conversation with the usual commonplaces, asking him about his wound, where he was taken prisoner, his last battle, his impression of the Germans at the hospital, his name, what part of France he comes from. Then I put the great question:

"Have you any news of the war?"

His name is Lahire. He comes from Paris. He obviously has news of importance. In a quiet, rather husky voice, speaking jerkily with intervals of silence, he tells his tale simply.

"This morning," he says, "at half-past seven, an artillery lieutenant with a wound in the leg arrived at the hospital. He still wore his sabre and his revolver, for he had been granted the honours of war. His coming made a great impression upon our little world of wounded, causing much more stir than the recent visit of the princess of Bavaria. In a trice every one knew of his advent, and he immediately secured an attentive audience.

"I must tell you that at the Ingolstadt hospital



officers and men live in close association. The officers, who number about fifty, are all in the same ward; but the rest of the ward, which is just like the others, is occupied by the men.

"Thus, while the lieutenant was speaking to his brother officers, we of the small fry gathered round them in a second compact circle. He had opened one of the last numbers of the *Bulletin des Armées de la République*; he read out loud, and, above all, he made comments as he read. He was bubbling over with delight. His fort, a fort of the third class, which was expected to hold out for thirty-six hours, had held out for six days. Three thousand melinite shells had been fired into the place. They would have resisted much longer had not their guns been of such short range. The fact is that, after they had broken up a German division, they were forced to surrender, four hundred of them, including fifty killed and a great number of wounded. This happened on September 25th. Until the surrender the fort was in communication with Verdun. As you see, my news is recent."

"But which fort was it?" I asked.

"The Camp des Romains to the south of St. Mihiel."

"What! The Camp des Romains has fallen? But in that case the Germans must have forced the Spada gap. The Hauts-de-Meuse must have been taken!"

"Not a bit of it! The Camp des Romains was taken from the north-west, and its capture has been an empty glory for the Germans. It is the fort of Paroches which commands the bridges of the Meuse and the passage

through Verdun, and they are not going to get this fort. Be easy in your minds, Spada and the Hauts-de-Meuse are all right. Better still, we have regained in the east, in Lorraine and in Upper Alsace, all the positions of the opening days of the campaign. We are at Château-Salins."

"At Château-Salins? Are we then also at Dieuze? My corps entered the place on August 19th and had to vacate it the next day."

"Yes, we are at Dieuze. In our batch there is a man who was wounded at Dieuze on September 13th—I think that was the date. This same day we took the town, lost it, and retook it."

"Are we also back at Thann?"

"Yes, and at Gwebwiller too."<sup>1</sup>

"What more did your lieutenant say?"

"He said that the disorder in France at the beginning of September was intense, and that Paris had almost abandoned hope at the news that the advance guard of the Boches had entered Compiègne. Then energetic measures were taken. A few days later, the Germans lost two great battles: one at Meaux, where we took 60,000 prisoners, barely half of whom were wounded; the other between Rheims and Craonne. Since then, for more than a fortnight, hand-to-hand fighting has been going on fiercely along the whole front. Their right wing has been cut off. We have occupied the line

<sup>1</sup> It need hardly be said that this story has no pretensions to historical accuracy. The current talk among soldiers is, as a rule, no less "imaginary" than the chatter of the drawing-rooms.

from St. Quentin through Charleroi to Namur. We have effected a junction with the Belgian army, and are closing in upon the Germans like a pair of scissors. We speak of it as 'Japanese tactics,' le coup de Moukden, and it seems that the coup has been successful. The two blades of the scissors draw nearer day by day. Everywhere the Boches are in retreat. Their front, which was at Rheims, has now been pushed back sixty kilometres from the town. We have entered Varennes. We have made quick work of it to spue them into Luxemburg and Prussia by way of the Moselle! Besides, our government is back in Paris, and Poincaré has been to London to visit George V.<sup>1</sup>

"Let me assure you that this lieutenant was in earnest. He was not orating to his inferiors in order to keep up their spirits. He was talking to officers, among whom were several captains and men of higher grade. He was absolutely confident of victory."

Little Lahire was still talking in the quiet voice with which he had opened. But we felt that he was animated by a sombre and intense, though subdued fire. We listened, mute and solemn. There is a keen joy which, overflowing and submerging our individuality, suddenly surges out to the utmost limits of our highest affections—family, country, humanity, God. *Freude, Freude*, sings the sublime chorus of the 9th symphony. Joy, joy. But this joy is grave and heroic. A shiver goes through your being, you are transfigured. You suddenly feel your footing in the eternal, in the absolute.

<sup>1</sup> Refer to previous note.

I said not a word. The little corporal of the 146th, his eyes remaining cool behind his glasses, continued his story. The circle of the audience pressed ever closer. Unable to restrain my tears, I took his hand, said "Thank you," and hastened from the room.

Oh France, my France!

*October 5, 1914.*

## A BREAKFAST

PLENTY !

I wake at twenty minutes to five, or, by French time, twenty minutes to four. There is a glimmer of moonlight in the casemate. The place looks like a fantastic sawmill with piles of planks lying about on the floor. The snores rise and fall rhythmically. However much divided our prisoners may be by day (as divided as men are in time of peace, and perhaps more so, for intimate association emphasizes differences and accentuates shocks), they, unknown to themselves, attain harmony in sleep.

As you know, I find this harmony distasteful. Moreover, for some time past, with the chill coming of dawn a violent rheumatic pain in the loins has rendered the recumbent position intolerable to me. I determine to rise.

Moving gently, in order to avoid waking Guido, who is an extremely light sleeper, I throw off my coat, which has been tucked round my neck, and lay it down to the right of my couch, close to my képi,

which I have lately pressed into service at night as a receptacle for the miscellaneous articles from my pockets. At this moment I should have appeared to you like a mummy, torso rolled up in the French military rug, brown with a red stripe, and the rest of the body, from the waist to the feet, tightly enveloped in the Ingolstadt blanket, stamped with the royal arms.

It is quite a business to get rid of these wrappings, for my straw is now mere chaff, and Bertrand, doubly soft as a betrothed lover and as a Phocæan, has a nose extremely sensitive to dust. Still recumbent, by means of slow contortions from right to left I unswaddle the upper part of my body. Then, sitting with my back against the wall, I take off my nightcap—my ancient nightcap, thoroughly impregnated with the dirt of Lorraine and of Bavaria, as dirty as Queen Isabel's shift. (I sleep with it pulled well down over the ears, to protect my head from the chaff.) At length I rise to my feet. The second wrapping, which confines the lower extremities, makes me look like a man about to take part in a sack race. I untie it at the hips. It falls to the ground like a skirt. Now I am dressed. I fold up my two rugs with infinite precaution and put them on the top of my knapsack. Seated on this improvised stool, I take off my night slippers and put on my heavy military boots, delightfully supple since Devèse, the cook-butcher, anointed them for me with a wonderful preparation of beef marrow. Emptying my képi of watch, pipe, tobacco, pipe-lighter, pocket-

knife, purse, and handkerchief (the huge regulation handkerchief), I stuff all these things into the pockets of my trousers. It is done. Guido has not stirred ; he dreams misanthropically. Bertrand has not sneezed ; he dreams amorously. With catlike stealth, képi on head, coat tucked beneath my arm, and shouldering my two haversacks, respectively containing my papers and the small articles of my kit, I hasten to the kitchen. To my great surprise I find the place lighted up.

That villain Marie, pipe in mouth, sticky, greasy, smeared with blacks, alert as a fox-terrier just let out for a run, is rummaging in his stoves. While I was still dreaming he had shaken up from their slumbers two others : Lambert, most devoted of men, my good little Lambert ; and a famished specimen from the 6th corps, by trade a charcoal-burner in the forest of Argonne, who would cut up an oak for you in return for a piece of rancid bacon rind. Yesterday evening there was not a scrap of wood in the kitchen. Dutrex "rowed" the cooks about it. But Marie, the wiliest of all the Normans in Normandy, rose by moonlight. Where can he have been ? How, knowing not a word of German beyond *nichts* and *ja*, did he manage to circumvent the guard ? Anyhow, axe in hand, Lambert and the charcoal-burner are vigorously and noisily attacking logs of pine. I am surprised. These logs have a strong resemblance to the timber-shores of the outer ditches. What has he been up to, this Marie !

"Canaille!" Dutrex sometimes exclaims to him.

"That's all right," says Marie cheerfully; "that's the only sort that knows how to live!"

In fact, he does know how to live. Always on the go, doing little services for every one in turn, swapping for chocolate the cigars which are given him, reselling this chocolate retail, buying with the money packets of tobacco and cigarettes, which he hawks for halfpennies in the dark passage outside the kitchen—he will find his way back to the valley of Auge with a nest-egg.

But I fancy he will get rid of some of it on the way. "Just think of it, you fellows," he frequently exclaims. "'Mézidon, fifty minutes' stop!' I tumble to the ground. I put away the first bottle of Calvados [cider brandy] I can get hold of. Then, 'Lisieux, fifty minutes' stop!' Won't it be splendid to get a little good Norman stuff into one's guts, after the ditch-water of Fort Orff! One will get home to the missus thoroughly cheerful."

This Marie is a delight to me. Our philosophies differ considerably. He has no pity, he says, for lame ducks. But he has such keen vision, he is so spirited and plain-spoken, and he is so original in his methods of expression, that he is above criticism.

While Lambert and the charcoal-burner (his name is Deschênes and he has been through two campaigns in Morocco) are apportioning for the stoves the spoils of Marie's raid, I empty on to the table the second of my haversacks. I wash and shave.



Marie pours me out half a pint of steaming coffee. "*Ja, ja*," he says, as he adds a lump of sugar, smiling his mischievous and knowing smile. *Ja*, in his vocabulary, signifies everything that is good; *nichts*, on the other hand, denotes everything that is bad. This done, he returns to the plutonic region.

Then, in the blessed solitude of the "salon," by the pale and smoky light of the distant lamp and of the dawn, I withdraw from the manuscript haversack the packet about which I fancy I have been dreaming all night.

You will think me very materialistic, I fear. But as you read, bear in mind that I am extremely well, that I am working as hard as usual, and that my appetite, with which you are acquainted, has to be satisfied here with a daily allowance that in Paris would barely have sufficed for a single meal.

It was Fritz Magen, the *Gefreiter*, the leading private of our Bavarian guard, who gave me this parcel yesterday evening. I had no thought of such a windfall. In the same mood as any other prisoner, I was waiting like the rest in No. 17 at the foot of my "bed" for the brisk appearance in the casemate of the men to take the roll-call.

It is half-past eight. Suddenly the door opens. "The roll-call," bellows Dutrex, bursting in gustily, followed by the *Feldwebel* and the lantern-bearer. Dutrex rapidly counts us. "*Zweiundzwanzig*," he announces to the *Feldwebel*. "Twenty-two." He

shakes me by the hand, saying : "*Gute Nacht, mein Freund ; schlafe wohl.*" The round passes on.

But Magen, the rear-guard, about to shut the door, lays down his lantern, produces a good-sized box, and thrusts it into my hands in a manner that is almost timid. "*Da,*" he explains to me in German, "my wife sent me a hamper this morning."—"Oh, thanks," I reply. But he hastens off with his lantern to join the *Feldwebel* in No. 18.

Greatly touched by this unexpected mark of friendship, I turn to Guido. We tell over the contents of the box. Five apples ; two walnuts ; a piece of thick pancake, smelling of the *gnädige Frau* Magen's frying-pan ; and half a bilberry tart ! What luck ! Monsieur Magen, Bavarian as you are, you are a brother, *ein Bruder*, a true comrade ! I love you ! I give Guido his share. I put mine away in the haversack of papers. I go to sleep to the thought that to-morrow, instead of the wretched thin coffee with rye and barley bread, I shall have a succulent fruit breakfast. This thought immediately transports me to Dully, to Fontainebleau, to Lablachère. But what is there that does not transport me there, visions of longing and of hope ?

Thus it is that to-day, at earliest dawn, slowly pacing the deserted "salon," I make the first good breakfast since my imprisonment.

*October 8, 1914.*

## THE FIRST LETTER

YESTERDAY the rumour was current, derived, it was said, from the guard, that we were going to be permitted to write to our families. A similar report has stirred the fort two or three times before, but has hitherto always proved false. Consequently the pessimists and all the disciples of Heraclitus and the Porch—headed by Guido—had a fine time of it in the casemates making fun of the comrades who were jubilantly commenting on the news.

On the glacis, at three o'clock, I met Sergeant Feutrier walking with Corporal Heuyer.

"Riou," observed the sergeant, "it's the first fine day of our imprisonment!"

"No, no, my friend," I said, half-heartedly aping Guido's pessimism, "it is raining." It was, in fact, drizzling; the sopping grass spirted as we trod. But Heuyer answered:

"Don't tease Feutrier to-day; he is too happy."

That evening, when I was working as usual at my side of the table, I was deluged with requests: "Riou, could you lend me your pen and ink?"—"Can you

spare a sheet or two of paper?" There was a regular procession of them. The mere thought, or rather the conviction, that they would be able to write home transfigured them. Home, the fireside! The loved ones, the familiar objects, the birthplace, the motherland! From this secret universe, at ordinary times deep buried beneath the surface of their minds, but suddenly exposed by the delvings of hope, there arose a powerful incense which intoxicated them all. What will they feel like at the prospect of going home, if the still dubious possibility of writing can arouse such an outburst of cheerful excitement?

Even the cooks, more practised in criticism than the other prisoners, had lost all sense of proportion. They handled their utensils with a terrible joy. Then the tumult was stilled. A gentle atmosphere of harmony hovered over the stoves. The cooks were silent and motionless.

O memories! Sweet images in which our love of life subsists and is fulfilled. Sweet images which, at night, in the gloom and fatigue of the camp, make us weep silent tears. Sweet images which, when death threatens, rise suddenly in our minds and maintain themselves, bringing benediction, the sole realities amid the void, very angels of God!

Suddenly the plutonic region burst into melody:

"O moun païs! O moun païs!  
O Toulouso! O Toulouso! . . ."

---

' O my native place! O my native place!  
O Toulouse! O Toulouse! . . .

sang Pailloux in his boy's voice; and our Bouquet, a son of Cahors, his heart filled with thoughts of his betrothed, intoned in a mellow bass:

"Vieillo villo de Cau, tan vieillo et tan fumado! . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The cooks, like every one else, were bewitched with thoughts of France. For France they forgot the most serious of their immediate duties. One was allowed an entrance into the secret universe of their thoughts, as if into a public place.

In the evening, when the roll-call was finished and the round was leaving with the *Feldwebel* and our new Bavarian sergeant, only just recovered from a wound in the foot received at Lunéville, Dutrex made eyes at me, and uttered the single word, "Oui." I went to sleep with the certainty that the news was true.

To-day every one has spent the morning in writing *his* letter, the one and only letter to which we are entitled. But what a disappointment! No more than one company is to be allowed to send letters each day. We are five companies. Only one letter every five days!<sup>2</sup>

But that melancholy barrier of silence which for a month and a half has separated us from the world has at last been broken down!

It is true that we have been ordered to say nothing about the war, and to instruct our correspondents to observe a similar restriction. This morning these *Ver-*

<sup>1</sup> Old city of Cahors, so old and so smoky!

<sup>2</sup> A few days later the regulations established the right to send four cards and two letters each month.

*boten* have disturbed us little. Do you think any one of the prisoners, when writing his letter, had a fancy for dissertations upon strategy? His wife, his fiancée, his children, his mother, his whole life, were before his eyes. At length people would know that he was alive! His head was singing with voices from his own fireside. He was intoxicated—at once giddy with excitement, softened, bitter, almost mad. The most indifferent, the most torpid, seemed to have been awakened with a start. Permission to write, the act of writing, had shaken them out of their inertia.

For, fortunately, imprisonment dulls our sensibilities. At first it causes poignant suffering; and suffering, of whatever kind, sharpens the faculties. But imprisonment is above all hunger, chronic hunger. Those only who have experienced it can understand the effect which chronic hunger speedily exercises even upon an active brain. At first it induces hallucinations. With terrible realism the sufferer recalls meals eaten before the war some particular dinner, such and such a picnic. The nerves of taste and smell, exasperated by the scanty regimen, are visited by memories of odours and tastes. The man thinks of nothing but eating. Literally he is nothing but a clamorous stomach. He will lie awake the entire night thinking only of this: What can I do to-morrow morning to secure a supplementary loaf?

Little Brissot, my friend of the Alpine infantry, when we were walking a few days ago with our two French medical officers, made this unexpected confession: "Only one thing can give me pleasure now—to get

food. Only one man interests me—the man who is capable of getting me food.”

This calm declaration from one so highly cultured that he will distract his mind from the cares of important business by reading James and Bergson, from one intimately acquainted with Montaigne and the Lake poets, seemed to us neither paradoxical, nor irrelevant, nor cynical.

Among those who are able, by illicit and extremely laborious methods, to procure food from outside, there are few who do not seize their opportunity.

Men will try to get a thorough chill, hoping to be sent to the infirmary, where they usually receive double rations. Yesterday two prisoners, one of them a corporal, fainted from hunger. Quite a number are so weakened by want of food that they can no longer climb the staircases leading to the courts and to the slopes. When we heard just now that in the neighbouring fort, Fort Hartmann, one of the prisoners had hanged himself, the same thought ran through all our minds: “The epidemic has begun, and will speedily spread to our own prison.”

Ultimately, however, people grow accustomed to short commons. Their activities, in some cases at least, gradually become accommodated to their regimen. In the long run, physical and mental life are reduced to nil. The man hardly suffers, and he no longer revolts.

Even in the bravest the soldier-spirit dies. Look at these men crouching on their heaps of straw hour after hour, silent and half asleep; or look at them as with hands

in pockets and hanging heads they slowly make their way up the slopes; who can imagine that these are the men who fought like lions at Montcourt and Lagarde?

These sudden visions of home were requisite to restore many of our prisoners, though but for a moment, to life. But for how many of them this has also involved a revival of suffering.

"I don't know how I shall be able to feed my three children next year unless I can get home soon. I can't help thinking about my farm, where the harvests of corn and of grapes have been so poorly gathered, and where everything is running to waste!" The soldier who spoke thus comes from Uriage, in Dauphiné. He stopped me when I was walking with measured steps after the seven o'clock coffee, taking my anti-rheumatic constitutional on the slopes. He drew me aside into a corner of the fortifications. Taking a letter from his pocket, he modestly asked me in a melancholy tone: "Could you tell me if that is all right, and whether you think it will be allowed to pass? Please be good enough to read it. You have my leave." Poor comrade! It cut me to the heart to see him. He wanted to look self-possessed, to look like a man. But he had been weeping. He spoke low and quietly in order to keep the tears out of his voice. The paper shook in his hand. I read: "My dear Marguerite. . . ." There was nothing in the letter. "Don't worry about me. . . . All is well with me. . . . We are very well cared for. . . ." These reassuring phrases were reiterated throughout the four pages, the



very words repeated again and again. My master, Jean Monnier, declares that repetition is the rhetorical flower of simple minds. What a tragedy underlay the disjointed prose. This prisoner of war whose eyes shone with hunger, this hollow-cheeked man who had spent all his poor pocket-money so that he could no longer buy any smuggled goods—bread, sugar, or chocolate—wrote: "All is well with me," "We are very well cared for." He said it and resaid it monotonously throughout the entire letter. It was essential that his wife should have no doubt about the matter, his poor wife who had already so much trouble to bear. I should have liked to pet him like a little brother, this man already grey.

I also wrote *my* letter. Having too much to say, I said nothing. What are words when the heart hungers for material presence, for a touch, for a living silence? My letter was not even of the regulation length.

At eleven Guido came in, with his eternal rug round his shoulders. He planted himself in front of my table. He fixed me with his eye, the cold, distrustful eye of the mountain dweller and of the priest. Then, making up his mind to open his thin lips, he said:

"You are in a gloomy mood. You have been writing to *her*."

We went out together. I felt his harsh sympathy as he strode by my side. Every one was out of doors, but there were very few groups. Each man walked by himself, rapt in his own visions. Guido remarked:

"It's extraordinary how little noise they make, eleven hundred warriors!"

*October 15, 1914.*

## STILL SHORT COMMONS

THE happiest moment in the day is in the early morning, when I leave the sleeping casemate. On the staircases, the lamps are flickering to extinction. The passages, always dark, are filled with the stench from the latrines and with what is sometimes termed a "poor smell." I make a hasty toilet in the kitchen; take my half-pint of coffee from one of the steaming cauldrons; gulp it down without straining it, Turkish fashion; don my coat and my green cap; mount the stairs leading to the upper courts. At length I am out of doors.

Dawn, fresh air, solitude!

This morning I was in a frisky mood. Life seemed good. The cold was biting. The white frost endowed the simplest objects with a Christmas purity. I walked smartly along the broad path which surmounts the escarp. When we arrived at the fort, this path, like the other parapets, was covered with moss and turf; but now, through our continual walking on it, the grass has been worn away. It has become a road.

Though I am a sociable creature, and delight in company, I find it extraordinarily pleasurable to be alone. I need long hours all to myself. In Paris, at Dully, at Lablachère, I never weary of my work-room, where I see no one before luncheon. The mornings are always too short. I don't know if I ought to regard it as an obsession, but here, when I have been walking for an hour immersed in thoughts and memories, in solitary enjoyment of the quiet northward landscape of fields and forests, my first encounter with a man causes me real discomfort. I cannot be agreeable before midday.

First of all, I made my clandestine and customary visit to your acacias. They grow at the highest point of our domain. A look-out is hidden here. I had long been familiar with a kind of large metal hood which interrupts the long grass for a moment, and projects barely a span above the surface of the soil. Yet had it not been for a recent adventure of two of the prisoners, Noverraz and Laloux, I should never have dreamed that this was a strategic eye, the eye of the fort.

Last Wednesday the men of the heavy artillery were engaged in their final practice before leaving for the Russian front. The idea was that Fort Orff was being attacked by an enemy hidden in Kösching wood, and suddenly appearing to the north of the fort. The object of the defence was to check the onslaught. Stationed to the southward, between Orff and Ingolstadt, near Lenting, the gunners were firing over us, the line of

fire almost touching the parapets of the fort. It need hardly be said that, by special order, all access to the parapets had been forbidden from nine till three, while the manœuvres were in progress. The guns thundered; the weather was fine; how dull it seemed, even to men whose legs were weakened from hunger, to be penned in the casemates! At ten o'clock the Protestant service was held. Crowds attended it, so that it was necessary to open both wings of the door, and thus to include in the chapel a gloomy passage which leads up to it. But what was there to do after service? The few who are usually energetic enough to play at prisoners' base, leapfrog, or some other lively game, in the east court, were itching to be out. The ration snatchers, those who, in the dark corridors, armed with a sharp knife, surreptitiously hack a steak from the passing joint, and those who, when the vegetables are being prepared, filch a turnip or a potato, longed for their open-air kitchens, hastily installed during the intervals between the rounds. The carvers and polishers, who sell pebbles fashioned into képis or into spiked helmets, or simply decorated with the Bavarian arms, sighed for the pleasures of their trade. The whole fortress was heavily uneasy. But who would care to take the risk of going out? The orders issued that morning had been peremptory.

But the cannonade continued, and my friends Noverraz and Laloux, being non-combatants (one is a musician and the other a doctor of medicine), were naturally lovers of military displays. Unable to endure

any longer the pharmaceutical aroma of the consulting room, they abandoned the place to Badoy, who, left alone, gave himself up to a profound fit of homesickness.

Beneath the sombre arches our adventurers go to and fro, exploring the ant-hill. All at once, having entered an unknown region, they discover a narrow staircase. They mount it. It leads to a revolving cupola. What luck! Through the peep-hole in the armoured wall it is possible for them to examine the whole of our northern horizon, right up to the wood. Upon the ploughs, the meadows, and the clover fields, the heavy projectiles from the 21-centimetre guns are falling incessantly. The earth shakes under their impact. Plumes of white smoke, like those emitted by burning straw, rise from the soil. Sometimes, in the clear atmosphere, they can distinguish the actual flight of the projectiles. But the imaginary columns of the assault are drawing nearer. The fire of percussion shells ceases; crackling shrapnel shells take their place. They pass from twenty to fifty yards above the glacis, great balls of dense smoke, from which are emitted in all directions smaller balls, a rain of satellites, which fly to pieces in their turn with the rattling noise of bullets.

Our two red cross men are absorbed in this scene, which lies almost at their feet, when the German quartermaster comes in. Red with wrath, swearing like a cabdriver, he seizes them by the arm, hurls them down the iron stairway, and installs himself in

their place. Crestfallen, but at bottom thoroughly well pleased at having enjoyed the sight, they return to the consulting-room to rejoin Badoy and his home-sickness.

This little exploit filled the whole fort with glee.

From the look-out this morning, or let us say from your acacias, the country was exquisitely beautiful. The position of the valleys was indicated by diaphanous bands of blue vapour. They rose softly as far as the border of the pines and vanished there. Birds flew through the silent air, shining in the sunlight. I heard the ploughmen crying "*hue*" to their horses. Beyond the oak coppice which adjoins the glacis on the Wegstetten side, a great herd of oxen was grazing.

All at once a company of Bavarian soldiers appeared upon the military road from behind the eastern redoubt. The men, recruits of the 1914 class, clad in blue tunic, and drill trousers tucked into their boots, bore no arms. They sang loudly as they marched, scanning the rhythm:

Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein,  
Fest steht und treu die Wacht am Rhein !<sup>1</sup>

Half way up the incline, between the forest and the fort, they halted. The captain, without dismounting, made them a speech. From a distance it sounded like barking. He stressed his syllables so vigorously

<sup>1</sup> Dear fatherland, calm heart be thine,  
Firm stands and true the watch by Rhine !

that fragments reached my ears notwithstanding the distance. The word *Heimat*, home, came again and again, like a refrain. Then they intoned the national anthem :

Heil dir im Siegerkranz,  
Herrscher des Vaterlands !<sup>1</sup>

They began to manœuvre. The company broke into two parts. One section took up a position in the bushes in front of the wood. The other section went back along the road as far as the glacis, to the oak coppice. The men stood there for a moment. A fat sergeant, the only one wearing the grey-blue uniform of active service, signed to them to fire at me. I could clearly make out his head, set upon a short, thick neck like that of a pig. He made gestures to signify his hostility. I shrugged my shoulders. Then his section, turning away from me, advanced in open formation across the ploughed fields, making as though to attack the men in the bushes.

I ran down the steep slope. A footpath I am fond of runs along it half way up. Were it not for the high wall of the escarp rising parallel with the grassy counterscarp, it would be possible to believe oneself in a peaceable valley in the open country. Here and there, beside the footpath, a few trees are growing—a young oak, stunted and gnarled, some dwarf poplars, a raspberry bush, a hawthorn. Across the ditch,

<sup>1</sup> Hail to thee in the victor's crown,  
Ruler of the fatherland !

capping the masonry and hiding the view of the plain, is the grassy covering of the first glacis, thickly set with wild rose-trees reddened with hips and haws, and displaying at intervals the silver and golden tints of beautiful little birches. Beyond the two slopes there is nothing to be seen, nothing but the sky. This morning the blue was of a tender liquid tint. At a great altitude tiny clouds were visible, blushing in the dawn.

I never go along this footpath without thinking of my friends de Bavier. I picture myself pacing the steep banks of the Dullive beneath the great dome of the trees. I sit upon my favourite bench. I look at the cool moss on the wheels of the abandoned watermill. Beneath the shifting shade of the beeches and the alders, I listen to the gurgle of the water as it flows over the stones.

This morning I seemed to be in a land of faery. Beneath every dwarf poplar the footpath and the turf were carpeted with yellow leaves, speckled with black, already decaying, and exhaling a penetrating odour of mouldering vegetation. It seemed to me that all the life of my holidays, all the faithful and pure friendship which, since adolescence, has never ceased to surround me at Dully, all the faces and the voices of this beloved house, were coming to me with the autumn vapours, rising from among the first masses of dead leaves.

At seven o'clock I was seated at my table. I found



a note from the sergeant of our Bavarian guard, the man who was wounded at Lunéville. It was his farewell.

Yesterday evening he had called me into the guardroom.

"Where are you going?" I asked, when he told me that he was leaving. "Are they sending you to the front?"

"I think so. I am recalled to Kösching to join my regiment."

"How far is Kösching?"

"About a league. The recruits are billeted there."

"Does your wound still hurt you?"

"Yes, at night."

He had given me his chair, and was sitting upon the wood of the smaller platform. He was a young fellow of twenty-five, with regular features, blue eyes, and fair hair cut very short. A fine, downy growth on his rosy cheeks made him look younger. I know little about him. He told me that he lived near Munich, forty kilometres from here. One day when he saw me at work, your photograph made him break his reserve for a moment.

"Is that your *Geliebte*?"

"Yes."

"For my part, I also was about to be betrothed. But the war has dashed my hopes."

He said no more. I lacked courage to question him. I understood from the first that this handsome fellow, born for happiness, harboured a secret grief.

Yesterday evening we were for the most part silent. Through the loopholes came the last rays of the setting sun, lighting up the orderly row of rifles in the arm-rack. In the shadow, on the great platform which filled half the room, two Landwehr men were sleeping. My friend Foch, the infantry sergeant, seated on a broached cask, was draining mugs of beer amid a noisy circle of Bavarians. In our corner a pensive peace reigned. My host was preparing me a slice of bread spread with minced meat. I sipped my beer slowly, after the French manner. Then he drew from his haversack a long and thin cigar, pierced by a straw. Handing it to me, he said: "Smoke that, for you like strong tobacco. It is an Austrian cigar, sent me from home." We said hardly anything more. He speaks but little French, and my German is not very good. All that we knew was that we were happy to be there together.

He has gone now. In four or five days he will be under fire once more.

This is the feast day of the Queen of Bavaria, the *Theresientag*.

"Did you hear the bells?" asked Durupt, when I entered the kitchen. "The sound came from every quarter this morning. It gave me an uneasy feeling. As I passed through Coblenz they were ringing madly for Manonviller."

When remounting the slopes I had indeed heard the bells, and had noted with surprise that the blue-and-white Bavarian standard was floating over the fort;

but meeting Guido outside room 32, I learned from him that it was the *Theresientag* and I was therefore able to reassure Durupt. The vegetables were now being prepared.

"No more news, no more papers, no more enthusiasm—it suggests the deluge!" says Labassan, a light-hearted fellow, all goitre and paunch, ever playing the fool, nicknamed l'Asticot (the maggot). He peels his potato with inimitable gestures which set the whole circle in fits.

Among them is Bonin, a Parisian, of the 31st of the line, the 31st half-brigade of Valmy, my regiment. On August 24th, at Longuyon in Meurthe-et-Moselle, he was wounded in the face, a bullet passing in at one cheek and out at the other. I am very fond of this little workman of the Marais quarter; his clear and quiet eyes radiate patriotism and good sense.

"Give me a match," says Loupe, who wears the long white cap of the German "Michael," its tassel dangling over his ear. With deliberation he lights his great china pipe, adorned with a view of Ingolstadt. Then, having rolled a spill of paper, he asks: "Who wants a light?" He goes the round of the circle, offering his burning spill. "*Et quasi cursores vitai lampada tradunt,*" he quotes. "Freely translated, 'Matches are scarce!'" For Loupe is lettered.

"Ah, my poilus," says a homely fellow of the 26th, a man sturdy as an oak, "it is plain enough that, with all these Maccabees about, the crows will have a fat time of it. They'll breed like rabbits! But we may

hope that after a while there will come the season of the lean kine. When there's no more human food, they'll be forced to eat one another."

"Don't you worry about the crows," rejoins a red cross man from Rheims. "It is we who are starving. Some of our men here actually turn over the kitchen refuse to find food!"

Our rations are indeed dwindling. This morning the quartermaster delivered to the kitchen staff so scanty an allowance of coffee and roasted barley that it hardly served to darken the water in our eight cauldrons. On Sunday each man had to be content with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  oz. of semolina at midday, and with  $\frac{2}{3}$  oz. of vermicelli in the evening. And what are we to think of this heap of potatoes on the ground at my feet? Is it intended to feed five hundred men, or one section merely? And to-day is the *Theresientag*! Really, matters begin to look serious. It is hardly an exaggeration to say "We are starving!" Who is responsible? Who has made up his mind to turn the fort into a hunger camp? It is certainly not the commandant, a thorough gentleman, kind-hearted, courteous, and just. Who then? Perhaps the quartermaster, an ill-bred Upper Franconian, cross-grained, obstinate as a mule, but whom I should have thought too stupid to be a cheat, is feathering his nest by giving us short allowance. Or is it possible that the ultra-orthodox Monsieur de Hertling, philosopher and prime minister of Bavaria, has made up his mind to starve the prisoners of "the infidel and perverse nation"?

Enter Marie and d'Arnoult. The former, cleared unceremoniously out of the kitchen because his traffic in articles of food became too notorious, is brandishing the censer from the chapel. The requiem mass is about to be said, and on this occasion the old curé of Lenting is to officiate, assisted by nine of our comrades, soldier-priests. The extemporized sacristan has no tongs; crouching before the stove, he is endeavouring with finger and thumb to remove the hot coals destined a few minutes hence to burn incense before the flesh and blood of Christ.

D'Arnoult, of the 6th mounted chasseurs (known in the fort simply as "le Chasseur"), is Major von Stengel's secretary. He takes his seat by my side. Having read the papers, he is able to inform me that in France the 15th class is to be called up on November 2nd. He relates that the Russians seem inclined to repeat with the Germans the tactics successfully employed against Napoleon: to entice them far into the interior, where they will perish of cold and hunger; to harass them unceasingly by threatened attacks; to break up their forces into incoherent fragments, and then to overwhelm these isolated detachments in detail amid the snows.

The men at work on the vegetables were listening.

"We are likely, then, to stay here for some time," said one of them.

"Never mind," says Bonin; "we are better off than we should be at Augsburg. In the Ingolstadt hospital I had a talk with some of the men from the Lechfeld camp. There, I gathered, the prisoners sleep under

canvas, mixed higgledy-piggledy with the wounded who are awaiting removal to hospital. There are no plates. They feed by sections, out of a trough. No meat. Nothing but turnips and red cabbage. Not very pleasant, this starvation camp, during the cold winter rains. They would regard our fortress as the lap of luxury!"

The potatoes have been peeled. Now for the turnips. The soldiers cut slices and chew them raw while they are at work. Poor devils!

The task is done. They sweep up the peelings. How limp are their movements! To think that they are all men between twenty and thirty years of age. The Lenting curé told us in one of his sermons: "You have been welcomed here as friends." Major von Stengel hit the mark more aptly one Sunday. Apropos of the fact that all through the week, from matins to compline, the religious services had been diligently said, he remarked: "Sie würden lieber etwas mehr Brot haben, als so viele christliche Seelensorge."<sup>1</sup>

But d'Arnoult has kept his principal item of news for a tit-bit. A man named Schieder, one of the two grocers of Hepperg, house number 31, jealous at finding that his trade rival was exclusively patronized for the clandestine purchases made on our behalf by the soldiers of the guard, has just written a furious letter to Commanding Officer Major Baron von Stengel. His first complaint is that the commandant's boot-cleaning

<sup>1</sup> The men would rather have a little more bread than so much spiritual nourishment.

orderly has insulted his (the commandant's) wife, "going to the length of making indecent and public observations upon the imperfections of her face and figure—conduct unworthy of the German army and the German name." The letter proceeds: "Further, it is an open secret that the aforesaid orderly returns daily from the village of Hepperg laden with a huge bundle of rolls, sticks of chocolate, boxes of cigarettes and of cigars, not to mention butter, sausages, smoked ham, and roast goose—conduct even more scandalous, if possible, than the insults offered to your honoured lady, for it transforms into an abode of bliss a national fortress where it is intended that the petulant pride of the French should experience salutary suffering." The worthy grocer, in order to give vent to his spleen, had pirated all the grandiloquence he could find in the local papers. It was extremely laughable. But d'Arnoult and I saw another side as well as the amusing one. Were we to be cut off from our extra supplies? The commandant had already summoned his *Wichser*, and after administering a temperate reprimand, had forbidden him to revisit Hepperg. Without losing his head, Georg (we, his patrons, speak of him thus familiarly) pointed out to the *Herr Major* that it was necessary to go somewhere for his honour's marketing. "You will go to Kösching!"—"At your orders, *Herr Major*, but Kösching is an hour's walk!"—"Very well, you will go to Kösching for three days; Hepperg is out of bounds for three days!"

Le Chasseur concluded by saying: "But after all,

I am convinced that the commandant will let the matter drop. This laborious letter reeks too much of the counter. Von Stengel has no fancy to see his gentility contaminated by association with the greasy scales of Schieder the grocer!"

It is already ten o'clock. I shall hardly get any more work done to-day. The "salon" is becoming a forum. My comrades are very good. They say: "I don't want to bother you. I've only just looked in to shake hands." But they ask for news; they give me their own; they retail the latest canard. There is always a canard in the fort. To-day, for example, the talk in the courtyards is that the Russians have taken Breslau. To pay the Germans out for the famous *Paris kaput*, those of us who are least able to speak German do not hesitate to greet the gentle Stheer, the assistant quartermaster, with a cheerful "*Breslau kaput*." Naturally I protest, for the news is too utterly ridiculous. So here I am sketching a map of the military operations. Dutrex breaks off his reading of Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkmann* to quote the latest issues of the *Münchener*. Durupt mingles his invincible hope with the debate. It is interminable! And my poor studies lie neglected.



*October 17, 1914.*

## I HAVE A PALLIASSE

WHEN I went out at seven o'clock there was a mist. It had the same smell, piquant and wholesome, as at Dully. The landscape was Japanese. I could have imagined myself looking at the right-hand kakemono in the drawing-room which gives on to the conservatory. The pretty village of Hepperg, brought near by a curious optical illusion, was stumped out in a long silhouette in the background, a delicate piece of filigree work seen through the soft, silky vapour. Here and there in the foreground crows made rich black markings. It was exquisite. There was no one else on the parapets. I walked for some time along the northern rampart. It was impossible to have too much of this autumn morning.

Two or three images rose to my mind. Chief of all was that of a walk in the Bois which we made just at the last with Guite, to talk about you. A thick mist was hovering over the lake. Invisible boats passed to and fro. Their lanterns were like large red moons gliding softly through the darkness.

The island was illuminated ; strains of music floated across to us. We were seated near the water. Close at hand was a tree, bending over and dipping its long locks into the lake. It recalled Hokusai's pictures. Next day I was to leave for Trouville.

It is strange. I had forgotten my captivity. I had forgotten the war, the battlefields of Lorraine, Belgium, and Poland. I had forgotten the terrible nights spent upon the bloody field of Kerprich. As I looked at the slender steeple of Hepperg church rising above the morning mist-wreaths, the only visions I had were those of a world at peace. The little yellowing birches on the slopes had transported me to Dully. The splendid purples of the oaks at la Lignière, the ruddy golden tints of the horse-chestnut avenue, the Virginia creeper garlanding with vermilion the windows of the house, and all the familiar noises of this corner of earth where I have spent so many sweet and happy autumns—filled with these visions, I looked and listened with rapture.

But little by little the sun had dispersed the mist. The slopes were thronged with prisoners. Their groups formed bright spots of colour in the pearly light. A sort of calm languor, of slow and melancholy serenity, seemed to have passed from nature into their hearts and their gestures.

The sunlight was so sweet that I had delayed upon the ramparts beyond my usual hour. When I went indoors again I brought with me a bouquet of autumn leaves—the leaves of your poplars.

"What on earth are you going to do with that?" cried Ancey Redbeard, whom we tease here because he looks like a Bavarian.

Le Second stood beside him, engaging little Le Second, the designer to Poiret, the costumier. He answered for me :

"Riou, at length you will help me to get even with this wretch of an Ancey. He makes fun of me because I pick flowers. There will be two of us now to scrub his German hide for him !"

I filled my pipe and was about to set to work, when Ploss, the German quartermaster, commonly as rough as a bulldog, came in and seized me by the arm, saying :

"I have a palliasse for you. Come at once."

He had just said the same thing to Dutrex. We hastened upstairs behind him, and followed him into a windowless storeroom, the only entrance to which was from the crypt beneath the great paved passage. Here, in the darkness, I groped for the heap of straw, and finding it, I unfastened a truss and began to stuff the sack of ticking. The material felt strong and hard as leather. I pricked my fingers with the thistles in the straw. "Whatever you do, stuff the corners well," said my co-minister, thoroughly enjoying his good luck. He stuffed with the dexterity of a man who had never had anything else to do all his life. The quartermaster, evidently coming to the conclusion after a moment that I was a very awkward hand, shoved me to one side, cursing in his Fran-

conian patois in a way intended to show me that he was furiously angry. Then to see him at the stuffing! I have been told that his trade is that of mason. He worked even faster than Dutrex. At length, "*Das ist fertig*"—"There you are!" he cried, giving a vigorous smack to the belly of my sack. Then, unceremoniously, he pushed his gift on to my shoulder, this great sack, tight and paunchy as heart could wish.

The acquisition of the palliasse is a revolution in my life. I was sufficiently delighted, on entering the storeroom, at the thought that I had said farewell to my wretched bedding. A restless sleeper, I always awaken with my back on the floor, stiff and aching, burrowing in the black chaff, having scratched up my dust like a fowl. I was uneasy at the approach of winter. How should I be able to endure the Swabian frosts upon this moving mattress? I should mention that it was obviously diminishing in size, and that in proportion as the few intact straws disappeared from the heap, the bedding of one of my good companions in the casemate seemed to undergo a commensurate increase. Quite exceptional virtue would have been required to enable him to resist the temptation. I was occupied all day at my table in No. 22, so that my little piece of property was left utterly defenceless.

Nevertheless, in the busy obscurity of the storeroom my joy resembled that which we take in forbidden fruit. Though lively, it was not wholly unalloyed. It is impossible to accept a great favour,

even if the acceptance does not involve any injury to another, without a certain perturbation in one's sense of equality. My energy at the work was diminished by a shadow of remorse.

But Dutrex, gay as a blackbird, stuffing his palliasse with the fury of an assault, said to me: "Old chap, we are to sleep in No. 22 from to-night onwards!" This suited me very well. I should never have been bold enough to plant my palliasse, all new and tight as it was, among the humble litters in the casemate. As soon as I accepted the Teuton's offer (and what could I do but accept it?), my precarious tenure in No. 17 was broken. In any case, I had become almost a stranger there. Since my installation at the ministerial table, except for a daily visit to my friends Guido, Bertrand, and Boude, I never crossed the threshold until bedtime.

All the same, my palliasse and my change of lodging induced feelings of sorrow as well as joy. I might say to myself as often as I pleased that the quartermaster, a surly Franconian who detests the French, had done me this kindness solely through inspiration from above (his only superior here is the commandant); that a refusal in such conditions would have been mere rudeness; that one need not be so fastidious as to decline an offer involving the enjoyment of a sleeping apartment with but one companion, and involving also, during the winter nights, the company of the still warm stoves; that, for the rest, it was the act of wisdom to terminate

at the first opportunity, and when it could be done without shock or violence, certain chance associations devoid of all charm. Reasons for accepting the palliasse and the accompanying train of benefits surged abundantly in my mind without setting my conscience at rest.

Not in vain does a man drink in the gospel with his mother's milk; not in vain does he from childhood onwards have instilled into him by accomplished parents the dogmas of the republic. Be it worth what it may, the motto of France is to me an article of faith. I fail to act up to my principles in this respect, but the failure makes me unhappy. Inequality, especially inequality that redounds to my own advantage, does injury to some profound fibre of my being. The enjoyment of material comfort produces periodical fits of remorse. The logic of my heart would have me a Franciscan. Yet God knows that my whole being and all my senses clamour for joy and loathe the ugliness of poverty!

But I keep my palliasse. The bulk of my effects had already been removed to the kitchen in No. 22. Maître Lambert, usher at the law-court of N., for whom I have secured employment in the kitchen as one of the assistant cooks, went to fetch for me what remained at No. 17. He found that my flask had disappeared. He forgot my nightcap, which Guido has just brought me. Now, therefore, I have everything here—all my baggage, personal property and national property, republican goods and royal goods.

*October 21, 1914.*

## THE REVOLT OF THE HUNGRY

YESTERDAY was a great day! Perhaps the greatest of my imprisonment, if I except that of my first "teube."<sup>1</sup> Oh, that first teube! After I had worn my clothes continuously for so many days and nights, the clandestine undressing at early dawn, beside the sink in Dutrex's kitchen; the forbidden and un hoped-for sensation, to be, as if at home, naked beneath the steaming water; the lather of soap everywhere, on the hair, the neck, the chest, the arms, the legs, the feet; the douche with the aid of a bailer; the dry rub! At length to have a clean skin and clean linen! Then to stride up to the slopes in the delightful morning solitude, repeating as it were involuntarily: "I am clean; what a luxury! I am in their hands; but I have managed to get clean. They ration our water, and I have had water. I am a prisoner; but I have secretly divested myself of my coating of filth, a burden almost as heavy as that of hunger! I am by no means wholly wretched!"

<sup>1</sup> The word "tub" alarms me, and the reader must excuse me for writing it as we really pronounce it in France.

It was a month since my last bath, at Tonnoy, about a week before we were taken prisoner. We had had a long and rough journey, from Chaouilley, at the foot of the hill celebrated by Barrès, to the Moselle. The dirt of three interminable nights in a cattle truck, in which we were herded pell-mell; the dust of the complicated movement towards the front; the stiffness of the opening march, the sweat and the fatigue—I had got rid of it all in the river. It was a beautiful evening, bright and warm. The sun was setting. The Moselle flowed rapidly among the islets of shingle and the sandbanks. Groups of men, officers and soldiers, men newly called up and reservists, indiscriminately mingled, naked as worms, the fat, the tall, and the short, the pot-bellied and the thin, fringed the bank with a strip of flesh-coloured humanity. We looked like a colony of Mormons.

After leaving the water, I challenged Soulier at ducks and drakes. Do you recall, little Darry, how we played ducks and drakes on the shore at Dully? I got the better of Soulier. One of my flat stones, skimming the water briskly, flying across the brown river, made its way right over the stream to strike the rocks on the other side.

When I think the matter over, this delightful bathe remains my most agreeable souvenir of Lorraine. I grieve to have to admit (notwithstanding Barrès, whose style would ennoble the most worthless materials) that all the villages we passed through, from Mont Sion to the frontier, and above all the village of Tonnoy, left on



me an impression of penurious and squalid melancholy, of ugliness and filth.

Yes, yesterday evening was epic.

The morning had passed as usual: an early walk; then work until dinner-time. There was nothing to foreshadow a storm. I had been for a stroll after dinner with Dutrex, Durupt, and Foch. A typical Bavarian day: a moist sky softening the harsh outlines of the landscape; a half light, uncertain and dreamy, as if longing for the rich azure of Piedmont and Provence; a piercing little wind which, even in the sunshine, continues to suggest melting snow and cold, almost a bise, whose very caresses sting.

For the last few days I had been working hard. My faculties were blunted. I had a vague inclination to idle. I was suffering a little from boredom, a state of mind by which, happily, I am rarely afflicted. I was discouraged. I wanted a rest, and yet lacked energy to make up my mind to lay aside my work.

As I was returning to my task, I encountered little Brissot. Lately he has taken to wearing the Bavarian cap, a sort of Phrygian cap which I have made the fashion at Fort Orff. Mine is green—you know whose colour green is. Brissot's is blue, and this tint sets off admirably his energetic blond countenance. Seeing that I was a little out of sorts, and not so cheerful as usual, he prevented me from going down.

"Abandon your kitchen for a while," he said. "It reeks of sulphur, drains, burned fat, and vegetable refuse. You are getting mildewed amid the steam. The

fires draw badly, and when I pay you a visit there your eyes are watering from the smoke. Besides, you have slaved quite enough this week under cover of your famous notice. You can be quite easy in your mind, you will have more than enough time to finish your studies. The Russian generals will secure you months and months for reflection. If that does not suffice, our diplomatists will see to it that you have an extension of time. This evening you must put aside your philosophies and your histories. We will go the round of the slopes together. The weather is fine. We will have a talk with my little friend across the ditch ; you can't think how sorry she is for us. Here is one, at any rate, who is utterly unconcerned as to questions of state. What does she care about French, Germans, English, Belgians, Russians? She knows men only. Her heart has skipped several centuries, and without an effort has attained the era of thoroughgoing internationalism. I can assure you that if she had to choose between a *hübscher Franzose* and a *böser Deutscher*,<sup>1</sup> there would be no hesitation."

Brissot is lighthearted, firm, bold, definite, gently peremptory, perfectly self-reliant ; he is a surprising compound of boy and of leader, of artist and tradesman, endowed with a lively will ; how can any one who is in the dumps resist Brissot? I accompany him to the parapet. Positively she is there, a sort of Munich Flora, short and plump, with great black eyes, whom he calls his "bonne amie," walking upon the footpath of the

<sup>1</sup> A handsome Frenchman and an ugly German.

glacis, accompanied by three bareheaded village girls and a troop of children. "Damn the escort!" says my *hübscher Franzose* in an aside. The conversation is opened; it is as innocent as the arched forehead and rounded cheeks of the three slatterns. One of them is in high spirits to know that her affianced is safe. He has been made prisoner, and she has just received her first letter, dated from Gap. She asks if I am betrothed, if the ring I wear (Véron, the corporal in the engineers, cast it for me a few days back out of one of the metal buttons of the coat of a *chausseau à pied*) is an engagement ring, and why it is made of silver. Brissot takes the initiative in the reply, saying with an air of disgust that it is not silver but platinum, a metal far more costly than gold. She is astonished. She has never heard of platinum.

The conversation continues, agreeably stupid. Then the children ask for French pfennigs. "You shall have some if you will give us a newspaper in exchange." The answer is not new to them; of course they have one ready. They roll it round a stone and throw it across the great ditch. The paper is four days old, but we throw back some sous which fall behind them some way down the glacis. Children and slatterns rush greedily to pick them up. Brissot, profiting by this moment of freedom, says to his Flora of the great eyes: "Come again to-morrow, and without your companions, who are not worthy of you!"

"My dear fellow," I say to him, "I leave you to your love affairs. Farewell."

The splendid reds of autumn flame on the great oaks along the border of the pine-wood—a strategic wood, designed to mask the west battery. The parapets are packed with soldiers, fine blue-and-red spots upon a dull yellowish-green ground. Some, chisel in hand, silently bent over their work, are carving pebbles. Others are wearing out their finger-nails and wearing down the corner stones in polishing tablets of white chalk destined for employment as *ex votos*. The cries of men playing at ball and at prisoner's base resound from the ramparts. At the foot of a slope adorned with a clump of birches, men are busily engaged in cooking their extra provender. There is a circle round each improvised kitchen: some dry and break up the small branches rifled from the trees of the fort; some tend the refractory fire, for the wood will not flame; some agitate the contents of the mess-tins—fragments of stolen meat, choice morsels of vegetable peelings, coffee dregs begged from the kitchen, potatoes pocketed when the dinner was being prepared, edible snails found on the grass on rainy mornings and kept fasting in an old cigar-box, cheese-rind, plum mushrooms, wild chicory. Soldier-priests walk up and down reading their breviaries. On one of the slopes, a crowd surrounds Le Second, who is displaying his latest cubist composition; at the "kitchen windows" a number of poor devils whose stomachs are empty are patiently sniffing the thin odours that rise from the cooking-pots. Here and there are to be seen the dealers, their wares hidden beneath their coats,

passing from group to group, and offering for sale at three or four times its value a cigarette, a lump of sugar, or a stick of chocolate. The blue-and-red ants have all emerged from the subterranean galleries of their ant-hill. On this October afternoon they produce a sad impression of mingled gaiety and wretchedness.

Yet amid this chaos I seem also to have before my eyes the picture of a city, a city of very ancient days. Characteristics of civic order are plainly manifest. A semblance of social life declares itself. Broken to pieces a few months ago by the sudden call to arms, flattened out and pulverized by the forces of hunger and tedium, the world that existed before the mobilization begins to reconstitute itself. By a sort of spontaneous generation, the eternal society rises anew from the void, with its groups of leaders and of poets, of traders and of artisans, with its classes of profiteers and of exploited, of originators and of simple executants. It is reborn, but in a less intricate form, with plainer contrasts, accentuated to caricature. Here, temperament, initiative, and energy have replaced tradition. There are no privileged positions. Social functions are not acquired as a right, but are seized. There is free competition. We all start from scratch. Each man takes his place in the natural hierarchy by the sole right of conquest. He can retain it only by cunning, force, or the power of genius, and at the price of a persistent victory.

Hence there have been strange changes of fortune.

A man who arrived without a farthing, sold for sixpence a cigar he had been given, bought chocolate with the sixpence, resold it at 1,000 per cent., and, continually bargaining, always turning over his money with increased profit, has succeeded in this way in amassing a capital. I have several times come across this brilliant trader on the slopes at nightfall, when he believed himself alone. Leaning forward on his hands, he was contemplating his greasy handkerchief stretched out on the grass, covered with little piles of silver. Another, who was scullion in a drinking-booth, has taken to writing poems; at the Saturday concerts in No. 7 he sings them to well-known airs, amid universal applause. A man named Tarbouriech, a farmer from the Agen district, has made himself graving tools and carves pebbles for French and Bavarian customers. He gets a mark for each carving, and can thus from time to time buy himself a supplementary loaf. He is a real decorative artist, a good sculptor, and he did not know it.

As I lounge in the last rays of sunshine, I admire the spontaneous manifestation of creative energy. I am astonished at the superabundance of talents in so restricted a group. Yet there is a sadness in the sight of this poor primitive city which has set itself to sprout upon the levelled bed of servile equality.

Everything betrays the stimulus of hunger. Hunger is here the universal mother of artistic, commercial, and industrial inventions; it even induces devotion to the collectivity, for the performance of a public service

commonly secures an extra ration. Work or starve, such is the rule. Each one makes his plans, exercises his ingenuity, does the best for himself. The aim is simple: not to die of hunger, to keep oneself going, if possible to improve in appearance and to grow fat. Some, too, having filled their stomachs, try to line their pockets. The strong try to get the better of the weak; the cunning, of the stupid; those who know a little German, of those who know none at all. Hence arises extreme inequality, tangible, crying inequality, shown by the cheeks, the eyes, the gait—the inequality between those who are hungry and those who are fed. Here is one running upstairs, happy, and lively as a cricket, for he has eaten his fill. Unashamedly he overtakes and passes a poor devil, a man quite well off in civil life, but who has had a visit from the body stripper when lying in a swoon on the field of battle; he makes his way up with great difficulty, breathless, shaky, clinging to the banister, finding the flight of stairs interminable.

Sad thoughts assail me as I walk. This battle without rifles or artillery, exempt from immediate risk of death, baser than war because it is more hypocritical, more crafty, and carried on under the Christian ægis—is it not life itself? Is not life immoral in its very essence?

For, after all, one must live. First of all, one must live. Now, here it is clear that there is not enough food to go round. What then? Then the field is open for the craftiest and the boldest. Let us suppose that there

are twenty bold men among the thousand prisoners. From the lean corpse of our cow they have cut their large share, the lion's share; now it is the turn of the little jackals to divide up what remains. Let us suppose that one of these "lions" has a conscience. Let us suppose that his mind is influenced by the morality of the gospels or by socialist ideas. Is he to sacrifice his average share, the share requisite to keep him in good health, because the others, nine hundred and eighty in the thousand, have nothing but a famine ration, and can have nothing else, whatever he may do? Ought he to make up his mind, as an act of goodwill, and knowing that the general regimen will be no whit bettered, to accept malnutrition for himself, to accept the permanent ruin of his health? Christ, where are your beatitudes? Will the determinism of the body ever be overcome? Will your reign, your city of justice, ever be established upon this dreary planet? But if the world continues, and if the general supply of goods should happen to become as greatly restricted as it is within the limits of our fortress, I shall be sorry for the city of the just. Let the twenty "lions," from virtuous motives, tie up their jaws, let us suppose that there are one thousand ascetics in place of nine hundred and eighty, the stew will be little thicker.

The electric bell, its jarring note issuing from all the doorways, breaks in upon these grey reflections, as much the outcome, perhaps, of personal discouragement as of the realities of the situation. It is five



o'clock. In a twinkling the ants disappear into the under ways.

In kitchen No. 22, Dutrex, Durupt, and the three cooks are standing round the vice. Half a gruyère cheese is fixed in it. This is the entire dinner; each one of our four hundred and eighty men, those fed from the first of the three kitchens, will have to be satisfied this evening with the four hundred and eightieth part of this half cheese. Devèse is usually responsible for the serious task of cutting up the cheese. He is an expert, being accustomed every day in Paris to serve out large quantities of ham, saveloy, and galantine. Unfortunately our cook-butcher is confined to bed in the hospital casemate with a sore throat. Dutrex has therefore asked little Lambert, Maître Lambert, Lambert the Good, to do the cutting up.

The great kitchen knife passes busily through the hard, white curd. The usher of Saint-Joseph-de-Tinée holds the knife in both hands and presses on it with all his weight. Beads of perspiration are standing on his besmirched forehead; his goggle eyes dilate; the ruddy skin of his face, downy with sparse golden hairs, is deeply wrinkled. He sweats as only a thoroughly good fellow, a man who puts all his will into his work, can sweat. Bouquet and Pailloux look on indifferently. Durupt, who becomes absorbed in the most trifling matters as if they were affairs of state, gravely counts the slices and arranges them on the right-hand corner of the kitchen table in piles of ten. Dutrex has

assumed his service manner. He stands stiffly upright at the left corner; his moustache is brushed away from his lips, his eye is severe, he holds his check-list.

"Lambert, cut more equal slices!"

"Corporal Dutrex, I am doing my best, as you see; it is very difficult."

"I know it. Durupt, you will give an extra piece to the rooms whose share is obviously too small."

Seated at my table, I contemplate this Rembrandtesque scene. The melancholy lamp, its chimney broken, is smoking among the pale faces and the piled up slices. The cheese is being contaminated by the foul air of the dark casemate, in which all the stoves have gone out. The light of the dying day still pierces the window bars, its tender blues and reds fading slowly away. Through the closed door comes the impatient, angry, and menacing sound of shuffling feet. The men waiting there know that it is "cheese evening." They detest this meal. It is cold and hard to digest, less filling than a ladleful of hot semolina or vermicelli, and makes extravagant demands upon their bread.

The distribution does not take long. When there is soup and meat, our four hundred and eighty men come individually to receive their rations, passing in a continuous stream, first in front of the cauldron to get the soup, and then in front of the vice for the portion of meat. The procession lasts an hour, as at a great funeral. "The holy water!" say the jokers, stretching out their basins. "The handful of earth!" extending their hands for the three ounces of cow-flesh.

But on cheese nights there is no procession. The twenty-three headmen of the rooms supplied from No. 22 bring bowls, and when these are charged the headmen go off to distribute the contents in their respective casemates.

At six everything is finished. Heaving a sigh of relief, the cooks clear the table and draw up the two benches and the three stools. All of them, cooks and ministers, are about to swallow their allotted rations. These look very small, especially to Lambert, who has been sweating blood and water.

There is a knock at the door. "Confound it!" says Dutrex; "some more fellows to bother us! We never have a moment's peace." Then, "Who is there?" he shouts in a forbidding tone. Two ingratiating voices make answer, those of little Corporal Véron and of Boisdin, a sergeant of engineers, long as a lamp-post. "It's us!" Dutrex opens the door, and the two non-commissioned officers of room No. 3 display their bowl, wherein are heaped, not neat slices à la Devèse, but fragments of every possible shape, square and rectangular, thin and thick, with no rind or all rind, tapering, pyramidal, and concave.

"Dutrex, old fellow," says Véron, "we're sorry to bother you, but our men are on strike. They're not having any of these leavings. Now, just look at this piece." He points out a well cut slice. "This is what the 'poilus' are receiving from kitchen No. 53."

"My good chap," Dutrex answers quietly, "what do you expect me to do? I give what is given me. I

know that Sarrazin's kitchen is specially favoured—it is the kitchen of the Germans. For the hundred and fifty-two men it has to supply, which includes himself and the twenty-four Bavarians of the guard, the quartermaster delivers almost as much as for us who are four hundred and eighty. Go and make your complaint to him. He'll give you a reception. You will find out how amiable he is. For my part, I have given up trying to argue with this tête de Boche, who is as obstinate as a hundred Spanish mules rolled into one, and who detests the French. It is true that the contents of your dish do not look very grand. As you see, I have had to get on without Devèse. His substitute is quite a novice. Besides, your room was the last served, and naturally you got the remnants. But I assure you that your full allowance is there. Durupt allotted each ration in little heaps with his usual conscientiousness. If your men don't like it, well, let's settle the matter among ourselves. You'd better go and consult our own medical officers. I can do no more."

Five minutes later the door opens. "Attention!" It is the surgeon-in-chief, Monsieur Langlois, the major with four stripes, who came here yesterday from fort No. 8 with three colleagues, so that, with our two other medical officers, MM. Cavaillé and Lœbre, we have now six doctors. He is short and fat; his hair is pepper and salt, with more salt than pepper; his gestures are lively; his head resembles that of Poincaré; his eyes sparkle mischievously. He takes from the

hands of Véron the allowance of No. 3. "You are nineteen?" he asks. He quietly repeats the work of Durupt. Upon the table, encumbered with our hunks of bread and our rations of gruyère, he arranges the bowlful of "leavings" in nineteen small heaps, being careful to make them as equal as possible. He then says: "Do you know that your room No. 3 is specially favoured? I have seen what has been allotted to the other rooms. I assure you, sergeant, that yours is one of the best served. Call your men." The men of No. 3 are waiting outside, and, judging from the noise which comes through the door, it would seem that there are others in the corridor besides the men of No. 3.

"Men of No. 3, enter," orders Dutrex. The nineteen defile in front of the table and M. Langlois points out to each man his own little heap. When they have withdrawn, Dutrex, in the presence of Boisdin and Véron, tells the surgeon-in-chief about Devèse's illness and the misdeeds of the quartermaster; how he favours kitchen No. 53 because it is the kitchen of the Germans; and how he takes a large "squeeze" from the supplies. "M. le Major, I was in the guardroom yesterday. By chance I came across his store-book, and I found that he had entered thirty kilogrammes of rice when he had certainly not distributed more than twelve kilos at the outside. It is just the same with coffee, sugar, milk, and meat. I am absolutely certain that he is a cheat!"

M. Langlois listens. He listens attentively. He has no wish to assert himself prematurely. He is not here

to play the officer. He is a friend, an elder brother, frank and simple. He looks behind words, and endeavours to grasp the secret essence of the soldier who is speaking to him. He must be a man of intelligence, good and just.

"We will discuss the matter again," he says as he leaves. "Meanwhile, keep a record of the quantities delivered to you. If you can manage it, make a steel-yard. For my part, I will sound the commandant. I believe him to be well disposed. Perhaps he will be willing to listen to a courteously worded complaint against his quartermaster. But if we make a complaint we must be extremely careful that we have strong evidence to back it up. And when all is said and done, I am under no illusions as to my power with the German authorities. We are at war. All the conventions have been violated. Notwithstanding the armlet I wear, I am a prisoner just like the rest of you."

The kitchen staff sits down a second time. Every one is enchanted with the surgeon-in-chief.

In the passages there is an unusual movement. Ordinarily, when supper is over, most of the men lie down upon their straw. The roll-call finds them nearly all asleep. During these two hours there is no life in the fort, except in the kitchens and in the consulting room, which are, after a fashion, clubs where the few intellectuals assemble to enjoy their tobacco in company, to read the paper, or to drink the beer which the most diplomatic among the circle has secured at

a high price from the guardroom—all these actions being utterly contrary to regulations.

It sometimes happens, however, that in their casemates the Bretons of the 19th and the 118th of the line, suffering from home-sickness, are day-dreaming as they lie motionless on their couches. If, now, one of them begins to hum softly to himself, his comrades, silent men for the most part, will little by little take up the strain. Most of them have clear, tender, somewhat bleating voices. They drag at the end of the verses. The movement is heavy and lachrymose. It sounds like the desolate psalmody of a religion of despair unilluminated by a single gleam of hope. Or again, in rooms No. 16 and No. 17, two fragments translated from Provence, one hears on certain evenings, voiced with a glad pulsation, *Magali*, *Galanto Chatouno*, and other love-songs of old Languedoc, that country of leisure and passion. The round coming to call the roll stops sometimes outside the door to listen for a moment to these graceful melodies, so different from the German *Choral* and the German *Lied*. But the thick crypts and walls muffle these concerts. The fort is not disturbed by them. Even the nearest casemate will only become aware at intervals, and remotely, of the sound of melody. The long corridors, to which the sun never penetrates, are already as quiet, as mournfully quiet, as they are during the heaviest hours before the dawn.

The unusual activity in the passages astonishes the cooks. The conversation outside becomes livelier, and

rises to the intensity of a real tumult. It draws nearer. It is at the door of No. 22. Now come blows on the door, shouts and execrations. "Resign, resign! Fritters! Legs of mutton!" Some of the rioters positively bellow with indignation. The blows on the door become more violent. "Come out, if you dare!"

This goes on for quite two minutes. The slender repast is finished. It is time to fetch some coal. Pailloux and Bouquet, the head cook, take up the coal-box, open the door, and say firmly: "Make way for us, by thunder!" They pass out. But through the door, which is left ajar, fists are shaken, and vociferations rain in. "Food snatchers!" Durupt, shrugging his shoulders, shuts the door in the shouters' faces. The demonstration becomes still more lively. The noise must be heard a long way off, for suddenly there comes a terrible growling, raucous and determined: "*Zurück mit dem Pöbel!*"<sup>1</sup> In an instant the crowd, numbering about fifty, disperses like a flight of sparrows. A single man, Georg, the commandant's boot-polisher, has broken the back of the riot. He disappears. The corridors relapse into silence, the mournful silence of a cellar. . . .

We are invited to No. 41, to visit Juramy and Roy, chasseurs alpins, together with Foch, d'Arnoult, and Brissot. We go out. A man of the guard, with fixed bayonet, slowly walks by the kitchen. He smiles and greets us.

<sup>1</sup> Back with the mob!



"*Grüss Gott!*"

"*Gute Nacht!*"

On the staircases and in the upper corridors the "ministers" encounter glances of anger and surprise. At No. 41 the comrades, seated upon the twin straw piles of Roy and Juramy, receive them with marked friendliness.

"Well!" says Sergeant Foch, the sturdiest soldier in the fort, chief of the second kitchen, "so it's your turn this time. You have had your revolt! It seems to have been better organized than mine. But it means nothing. We business men, Brissot and I, know all about the caprices of the crowd. Suddenly, without knowing why, it rages against friends or against foes, haphazard. These good fellows are governed by pure instinct. In my opinion this particular revolt has been mainly the work of the exploiters whose usurious traffic was relentlessly suppressed by Dutrex and Durupt. It's bad policy to be savage with the strong and gentle with the weak, for the strong avenge themselves. Now they are posing as defenders of the collective stomach. If you only knew all that they are saying, and all that they are leading others to say! I've had my eye on them for a long time. This evening they really believed they were going to do something—that tomorrow they would usurp your places. They were already licking their chops. It was a case of trust against trust. I shall laugh if the trust of virtue proves, for once in a way, victorious."

Dutrex is taciturn.

"Before the roll is called," he says, "I shall hand in my resignation to M. Langlois."

"That's right," says Brissot approvingly. "Otherwise you will seem to be clinging to a fat position."

"What are you thinking about?" protests Durupt. "You will seem to justify the enemy; you will accept defeat. The sharp practitioners who, under pretext of serving their comrades, were buying for sixpence from the guard commodities worth about twopence, and selling them at a profit of a shilling, thus realizing as much as a pound a day—these fellows whom you saw through, who would have liked to blarney you, but whom you summoned to the table, whom you shook as one shakes a plum-tree, whom you threatened with the cells (some of them even non-commissioned officers), whom you treated in that cutting way which you know how to assume—these sneak-thieves, who are almost as repulsive as the body strippers, do you want with your own hand to put them in your place in the kitchen? I don't understand you. I stand firm. If there be a trust of virtue, I promise you it shall checkmate the trust of the lick-cheeses."

"Meanwhile," says Foch light-heartedly, "let us drink. Here's a big jug of beer which I brought from the guardroom under my coat. For your sake I made myself look like a woman in the family way! What, old Riou, are you still in the dumps? Haven't you got a thirst this evening?"

"My dear Foch, I admit that I do not feel myself to be designed for the government of men. One who

wishes to rule men must make up his mind to despise them and to come to terms with their rascality. Now (you will laugh), I respect them. I am even rather fond of them. And it is my weakness to wish them to be fond of me. These hostile cries, these angry glances, which we have just had to endure—I find them difficult of digestion.”

“Digest them as quickly as you can, you big baby! It’s a stage in your education. You need to lose a few illusions. Men are rather a poor lot. You Christians believe that men are brothers. That’s nothing but religious tosh. Men are no good. Brothers?—not a bit of it. They are venomously jealous of any one who has a straighter nose or a prettier wife than their own, of any one with greater talent or more charm. No doubt the worst of them have their good days. When the weather is fine, when their bellies are well lined, when they have done a good stroke of business, they are pleased with every one. They are all smiles. But what does that amount to? A momentary intoxication. The instant they fancy that their neighbour’s belly is fuller than their own, or that he has had better luck in business, there is very little smile about them, and don’t you forget it. It is true that some men are the salt of the earth. These are worth loving, for they are scarce. But most people pass their whole lives in being envious. When it’s their turn to become stiffs, it’s envy that finishes them off!

“If they had any sense, these fellows, I shouldn’t mind so much. But they swallow all the gossip that

comes their way. Morning after morning a flight of canards settles upon the fort, and the prisoners spend the rest of the day in roasting them. Do you know what they are all telling one another in the casemates? They declare that the major with four stripes made a raid upon kitchen No. 22, and that he found fifty chops, seventy steaks, a leg of mutton, a lot of fritters, a store of cheese—all pinched by Durupt from the men's rations. Whereupon the major sent you to the cells under guard of four bayonets! Now you know why these rascals looked at you with angry surprise as you passed along the passage.

"When such fellows are really famished, as they are here, seeing that they are jealous and stupid, and, above all, driven out of their senses by starvation, how can you expect them to be anything but idiots? All at once, they see red, and must instantly have a victim. But they are incapable of finding one for themselves. Always some cunning rogues among them point out the victims, indicating as if by chance the men of whom they are jealous, and whom they long to replace. Don't take it so much to heart. In ten years from now it will all seem to you perfectly natural."

This profession of social faith gives me no pleasure, although to-night the temptation to approve it is only too strong. What an affair! It is precisely the kitchen run by Dutrex and Durupt, men of principle, men who may be said to be scrupulous to excess, before which a noisy demonstration is made, whilst no one attempts to interfere with kitchen No. 53, notoriously privileged

by the quartermaster. How mean! And it is Frenchmen, men of intelligence, men quite capable of recognizing the real causes of things, who, inspired by envy and revenge, have directed against No. 22 the vague wrath of hungry stomachs! *Fames malesuada*. Yes, this is what it means, the ambition of a few turning to profit the hunger of all.

It is strange, but a clear recognition of the motives that have brought about this storm in a teacup produces in my mind a sort of philosophic disillusionment. My thoughts pass quite beyond the present affair. I find myself dreading all at once lest the great social movements, those I most admire, those I see on the horizon of history, sublime, heroic, superhuman like the Marseillaise of the Arc de Triomphe, may not resemble this trifling affair, which aimed, beneath the standard of justice, at introducing a set of rogues into the heart of the temple of their thoughts, the kitchen.

If we look at matters without prejudice, a little thing is just as significant as are many events which are regarded as grand simply because the trumpeters of a faction or of a nation have magnified their importance. Indeed, this attempted revolution concerning a piece of cheese suddenly renders all revolutions suspect to me. The little revolution seems to spoil the great revolution, and to lessen the stature of humanity. Is it possible that, in the last analysis, clamours for justice are nothing more than the growls of envy?

Dutrex left us early. I stayed in No. 41 until the roll-call. I was genuinely unhappy.

It need hardly be said that M. Langlois absolutely refused to accept any resignations.

To-day I was out walking before dawn. My thoughts were gloomy. The sun rose in a calm sky, a sky that was greenish-blue, clear, and magnificent, with a flotilla of tiny clouds, white tipped with gold, and melting away at the edges.

When I began work just now I was well content, content to be here, among the placidly gurgling cauldrons, and away from the company of men. But this sudden access of misanthropy is probably the sequel of my fit of the blues. I am "fortorffish," as the prisoners say. The paroxysm will soon pass.

November 6, 1914.

## A CHANCE CATERER

THE weather is sombre. The winter is coming on apace. On the grass, rusted by the frost, the leaves fallen from the willows have already rotted. This morning a gentle, damp wind was blowing, increasing at times to vent long sighs. The whole sky was bistre. Towards France, however, an islet of light was visible. On the Austrian side, the dawn had the ardent flushes of sunset. Skimming the ground, great flights of noisy crows were settling down on the freshly turned ploughs.

Things are going badly in the fort. Not that there is any fear of defeat. Durupt has been at pains to translate the *Deutschland über alles* of the German military march into a sonorous *Alles über Deutschland* filled with hope. But even Durupt, our Déroulède, is depressed. He had promised us liberty before All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, declaring it certain that we should celebrate these festivals at home. But All Saints' Day has passed without the faintest murmur of peace. Yesterday evening the revictualling officer

said to Foch: "The war will last two years." This prophecy has gone the round of the casemates, disseminating gloom. Every one's patience is exhausted.

Our dietary is still further reduced. To-day we had some horrible little prunes, two years old and as hard as wood, in lieu of meat. Henceforward our five companies are to supply every day a gang of a hundred men to work five miles from here on the military hutments. Ten miles march, eight hours' work, and to make up for this fatigue duty, a sausage of about the size of your finger. The German ganger, a tailor by trade, and a man with the finest beard you ever saw, is by no means a bad fellow. During fifteen years he has made the seat of his trousers shiny in the tailors' workrooms of Paris. He has no hatred for the French. As he passes from group to group with his eternal, "Allons, messieurs, travaillons un peu, n'est-ce pas?"<sup>1</sup> he modulates his voice in such alluring intonations, that one would say he was a salesman in the rue Blanche tempting a fair customer to inspect his wares. But the customers of our tailor-ganger are proof against temptation.

Yesterday, Brissot was with the gang as interpreter. The work is going on as slowly as usual, twenty men getting in one another's way where two would suffice, when, towards four o'clock, the chief engineer-officer, the *Baurat*, arrives on the scene. His tone is rough, and he makes impatient gestures. He accuses

<sup>1</sup> Now then, gentlemen, can't we work a little harder?



the men of slacking, whereupon Brissot makes answer, in his cold and cutting manner: "*Herr Major*, what can you expect them to do when their stomachs are empty? They can't work any harder. Look at them! Their eyelids and the wings of their nostrils are blue. Do you see that fellow in the trench? He eats every earthworm that he turns up with his spade! At home in France, *Herr Major*, I am an employer of labour, and I expect my men to work hard. But I pay good wages, and they get plenty to eat. Can I honestly ask these poor devils, who are starving, to do any real work?"

At this unexpected reply, the officer bridles as if he had been flicked with a switch. It is too much for him that a common soldier, a Frenchman, a prisoner, can speak so boldly to him, the great *Major*, the master. Thunderstruck, half in mind to strike the presumptuous fellow, he suddenly turns on his heel, and, cursing loudly, he flings himself into his *Mercédès*, spits out a command, and drives in hot haste to Fort Orff, where he issues orders that Brissot is never to accompany the gang again.

Having got wind of this affair, I sought out the eater of earthworms. He was a reservist of the 211th regiment, from Montauban. He was didactic, and explained to me that worms are no longer edible when you dig too deeply. Those more than two feet from the surface have a bitter taste. "They look all right; they are large and fat; but they are nothing but earth!" The quaint thing is that this little fellow,

sturdy, hairy, and bronzed, by no means looks starved. It seems that the earthworm must be nutritious.

Nor is this the only culinary discovery inspired by the regimen of famine. When Brissot is eating his piece of Münster cheese on Tuesday and Saturday evenings, a comrade stands at gaze, rubbing his hands. At length he says: "You mustn't squander the rind." Brissot hands over the rind, which he has purposely cut rather thick. The man then adds: "But you mustn't squander the paper either."—"What will you do with this dirty, stinking piece of paper?"—"I shall boil it with some potato peelings under the birch-trees. It's splendid seasoning. Don't you see that it is soaked with cheese-fat?" This same prisoner, a nice lad, always good-humoured, well set up, hunts rats in the grass. His most famous dish, one he prepared a fortnight ago, was a stew of apple parings with rats. He secured the apple parings from the participants in a sort of "banquet," a clandestine "feast" partaken of one evening by a large group of friends after an unusually liberal consignment had been received through the instrumentality of Georg.

It was dusk. Brissot and I were strolling along the slopes discussing, apropos of Bergson, the relationships between philosophy and life. I was surprised that, instead of pushing straight ahead, he turned about. I like to walk quickly, but he insisted upon pacing gently to and fro on the top of the slope looking towards Hepperg. Hands in pockets, wearing the

close-fitting tunic of the chasseurs alpins, little Brissot was scanning the horizon from time to time, when two men whom I had not noticed before, Loux, a colonial infantryman, and Vernes, a linesman of the 1910 class, a compositor on *Le Journal*, who were stationed at the two angles of the eastern escarp, simultaneously exclaimed: "There he is!"—"Hullo!" says Brissot, "he's got a big load this evening." I look. From behind the recently felled pine-trees bordering the Hepperg road appears a man carrying a box under one arm and a large sack under the other. He crosses the ploughed fields and comes straight in our direction. His progress is slow. He stumbles over the ridges. He looks utterly exhausted. From time to time he stops and deposits his two burdens on the ground. After he has reached the foot of the battery, we lose sight of him for some minutes. Then he reappears upon the advanced glacis, among the wild rose bushes. I recognize Georg Doppel, the baron's orderly, his face grey and dripping with sweat. He is in full dress, looking very smart in the light blue Bavarian uniform with its red cuff-facings. He wears a fancy cap similar to that of his *Herr Major*. But here comes the sentinel making his rounds! "Twenty-two," call out Vernes and Loux. Brissot takes off his cap; it is a signal. Georg lies down among the bushes. The sentinel, pipe in mouth, his threadbare *Mütze* drawn down over his eyes, walks carelessly by, looking like a country bumpkin. His rifle, hanging to the sling, knocks against his thighs. He passes on to the northern wall and disappears. Brissot

puts on his cap again. "Get to the rope, quick!" says he to Loux, "and you, Vernes, to the ditch!" Georg has placed his sack and his box on the masonry of the counterscarp. He ties them to a rope and allows them to glide down into the great ditch. There Vernes receives the goods, sets them against the wall of the escarp, and ties them successively to the rope which the colonial infantryman lowers to him from the top of the wall. Two hauls, and the food is inside the fort. It is now quite dark, and Vernes and Loux hurry off to get them safely housed in No. 34, Brissot's room.

Georg makes for the great iron gate and rings the bell. The man on guard peeps out through the judas. Recognizing the commandant's orderly, he hastens to unbolt the gate, and respectfully draws aside, though without going quite so far as to stand to attention as he would for the major himself. The boot-polisher enters, firm of tread, head erect, giving a gentle greeting. In the most dignified manner he makes his way to No. 34. "*Grüß Gott, Georg!*" Conversation ensues between him and Brissot. Gold coins pass from the French purse into the German, and the boot-polisher takes his leave. "Now then, you chaps," says Brissot, "let's have dinner!"

To-day Brissot's guests ate buttered eggs, herrings from the Baltic, known here as "Bismarcks," and a great dish of stewed pippins, all washed down with the contents of a small barrel of cool beer, and cooked upon an illicit stove by Loux, the colonial infantryman, a sabot-maker from Bresse, cook-in-ordinary to Brissot.

Since this banquet, the sprightly Le Second, who in the kitchens had already nicknamed our "salon" the "navel of Fort Orff," has taken to calling casemate No. 34 the "Capua of Fort Orff."

The palliasse of the man who is averse to "squandering" is not far from that on which Brissot and his guests were dining, semi-recumbent in Roman fashion. The rat-hunter was watching their culinary activities. When the time came to dispose of the herrings, he ran up, saying: "Don't squander the heads and the tails!"—"There you are, old chap."—"That will be fine seasoning to-morrow for my rats. These fish are dripping with brine. Since the kitchens have been rationed in the matter of salt I have found it impossible to get even a pinch from the cooks." When the diners attacked the pippins, each guest peeling a portion for the common stew, the little soldier said: "Don't squander the parings." Nimble and lively as a squirrel, he ran from one to another, receiving the strips of peel in his képi as they fell from the knife.

I saw him next day under the birches, beaming with delight over his stewpan. "Here's plenty!" he said. "I have a rat, the apple peelings, and the heads and tails of the Bismarcks! Best of all, they have just turned out this straw here."—"But the straw is contaminated. Surely you know that this is the bedding from a lousy casemate."—"What does that matter? Fire purifies everything. It's a devil of a business now to get any wood in the fort. Reeds, raspberry canes, the lower branches of the trees—they've all been

burned. Some of our fellows are attacking the timber-shores of the counterscarp and the lids of the latrines. But that is a dangerous game. I don't want to spend a week in the clink on bread and water."

With these words he began to throw the condemned straw by handfuls between the two stones of his fireplace. What a smoke it made! From time to time, with his hard and black fingers he lifted the scorching lid of the mess-tin, saying, "Just look at this rat, it's as large as a guinea-pig!" Licking the stick with which he had been stirring his stew, he exclaimed: "I assure you this will be excellent. The dash of fish gives it a rare flavour!"—"But tell me," I said, "what use do you make of the Münster cheese-rind? The comrades have told me that you collect it from them."—"I put it in my bowl when I go for my ration of coffee. It melts in the hot liquid. I give a stir, and then I have coffee with cream. It beats caramel. If Brissot knew that, I bet you he'd keep the rind for himself!"

Since yesterday, Brissot has been extremely put out. Germany is short of men, and all the physically unfit have orders to present themselves for re-examination. Upon receipt of his notice, Georg trembled. Providing himself with a pair of large spectacles, he set out for Ingolstadt. To gain the double end of having a good time and of making himself look sickly, he went on the spree. It was of no avail; he was declared *feldtauglich*, fit for active service.

Yesterday the commandant, walking between M. Langlois and me, observed: "My *Diener* has not come

back yet from Ingolstadt. He is a good boy, but he sometimes takes extraordinary ideas into his head. The other day he asked my permission to present his sister to me. I agreed, and gave him an afternoon's leave to go and fetch her. I did not see him again for three days. When he returned, he acknowledged that his 'sister' was a lady-love from Ratisbon whom he was pining to see, and for whose journey he had paid. This time I have sent him before the medical board, and he has been away for two days! He is an excellent servant, but he has odd ways." Baron von Stengel laughed. I made answer: "*Herr Major*, your *Bursch* seems to me a smart man, lively and intelligent, and of imposing appearance. I would rather be served by a clean and ready-witted rogue than by a virtuous dullard."—"I am quite of your opinion, monsieur Riou."

Georg did not turn up until this morning. I was working at the "ministerial" table. The eight cauldrons were steaming fiercely. The kitchen was filled with vapour, so that I could hardly see what I was writing. Suddenly some one tapped me on the shoulder. I turned round, to find Brissot, accompanied by Georg. I shook them both by the hand.

"*Felduntauglich?*" (Ineligible?)

"*Nein! Donnerwetter!*"

"Georg wants you to do him a service," said Brissot. "Will you translate for him this letter to the French medical officers?"

I drew a sheet of paper from my haversack. Without

studying the contents of the petition as a whole, I translated it phrase by phrase, almost word for word. This is what I wrote :

“HONOURED COMRADES,—

“In an unexpected manner, has struck the hour which summons me to fight for my king and country. Like all of you, I must do my duty ; and, like all of you, it is possible that in a short time I shall find myself in France (*sic*) as a prisoner of war. If I encounter there men having like sentiments with myself, I shall have no fears for the future. As far as I have been able, I have fulfilled towards you and your comrades the duty of loving one's neighbour.

“An old proverb says : ‘What you do to me, I will do to you !’ I trust that you also, honoured comrades, will take this proverb to heart.

“I am a poor soldier who was orphaned in early childhood, and who, from the age of eight upwards, had to live among strangers.

“From my sixteenth to my twenty-fourth year I have been a wanderer in the world, and my experiences have been mingled of good and evil.

“You will excuse me, honoured comrades, if I now venture to make a request.

“Among your colleagues there must be some in a position to do me a good turn.

“I beg the officers to allow a little collection to be made, and shall be eternally grateful for this permission.



"Awaiting your favours, I remain, the most devoted of your comrades,

"GEORG DOPPEL.

"PS.—I had some conversation yesterday with the principal medical officer of the Ingolstadt hospital. He informed me that there would be a continual exchange of medical officers and of the personnel of the French medical department with German prisoners."

Without comment, I handed the letter to Brissot, who then said: "Georg also wants you to give him a letter of introduction to the principal medical officer." It is a weakness of mine that I cannot say "no," and I therefore promptly wrote this note:

"MONSIEUR LE MÉDECIN-CHEF,—

"M. Georg Doppel has begged me to translate the accompanying petition, and to give him a letter of introduction to you. In my humble opinion, he has rendered services [I should have liked to add the words 'extremely onerous'] to many of our comrades. For my own part, I shall gladly contribute to a collection, if you think it well to permit one.

"Your affectionate soldier,

"GASTON RIOU."

In a very few minutes, M. Langlois arrived. "Here's a funny business!" he cried, laughing with his mischievous eyes and all his fat and benevolent little body. "This letter of Doppel's is a pearl! I shall treasure it.

And the Parthian shaft—the postscript promising my own release! Doppel is really a most amusing rascal.”

“And what are you going to do, monsieur le Médecin-chef? Are you going to allow the collection?”

“Certainly not. Hasn’t he fleeced us enough already? He ought to have put something by.”

“No doubt. But he never thought they would send him to the front. He imagined that he would be able to go on luxuriating at our expense in the neighbouring villages, living like a lord, until the end of the war. The fact is, he is pretty well cleared out!”

“Don’t you worry. I’ve been able to make his mind easy. I have just given him a general letter of introduction to the French officers. If you had seen him unbuttoning his tunic and putting away my letter in the pocket of his shirt as if it had been a scapular! To be a prisoner in France will be like heaven to him. I am sure that I have deprived Germany of a rifle.”

Poor Georg! Poor Bavarian Gil Blas! You are of those who come to terms frankly with their prejudices and their appetites. The service of king, country, and religion; the precepts of morality: he has never had any thought of violating these sacred things. He allows them to float vaguely in his heaven and to widen the horizon of his thought, remote images which it is obvious that people love, familiar lineaments of the region in which he is accustomed to live. The idea has never entered his mind to declare that the idols of his nation are false gods. He endeavours to humbug them,

but he believes in them. He is no scoundrel. He lacks the unalloyed selfishness, the whole-hearted scepticism, characteristic of the thoroughgoing knave, the successful brigand, the true diplomatist and dealer in men. His actions are unscrupulous, not so his thoughts.

Hedonist, scapegrace, having at bottom the heart of a child, indifferently adapting his practice to his beliefs or his beliefs to his practice, he reveres in good faith, like most Germans, virtue, honour, religion, the prince. With the grandiloquence natural to his race, he embellishes in his own mind the most trifling of his private machinations.

A little while ago, a French comrade asked him to pay a debt. He frowned, drew himself up, and assumed an offended air. Turning to d'Arnoult, who was passing at the time, he said :

"When I think of the way in which, scorning the risk of death, I have provided him with goods, how I have hazarded my life again and again to bring him tobacco, and that he now dares, in your presence, to insult me by asking for this paltry sum of twenty-four marks! I punish such a man with my contempt."

"Oh," answered d'Arnoult commiseratingly, "don't rub it in. You have punished him enough already!"

Georg has a soaring imagination. He loves the great and the impressive, that which breathes order and power. He loves his commanding officer. He loves the royal army. He loves his uniform. He loves that civilians should tremble before him. He loves to be

admired. He loves to make a heroic figure in the world. After one of our casual feasts, when Brissot asks him to sing some Munich songs, he reserves always for the tit-bit certain verses which he declares he wrote himself in praise of one of his numerous *Geliebten*. We gather that in the village of Hepperg alone six women are madly in love with him—the burgomaster's wife, the schoolmaster's wife and sister, the wives of both the grocers, and the belle of the countryside. "The seven nights of the week," he gravely assures us, "hardly suffice." Whereupon, this Don Juan removes his cap and takes a small collection from the guests. He is so expert a liar that I suspect him of being the first victim of his own romances. Every one knows him to be *felduntauglich*, a man unfit for active service. But this is no hindrance to his having taken part in the battle of Dieuze and to his having been wounded there by a French bullet! He bares his chest and makes you touch the scar. Tarascon is situated much further to the north than most people imagine.

On All Souls' Day we went to the Ingolstadt cemetery. Détry and I carried the wreath. Half hidden by the leafy garlands, tied with the French colours, we set the pace firmly through the Theresienstrasse, which was packed with townsmen come to stare at us, almost all in mourning—old men, women, wounded soldiers on leave, and a noisy rout of children. There were no hostile cries, as there had been two months earlier. Some of the onlookers uncovered as we passed; the children loudly demanded buttons as souvenirs,

crying *Knopf, Knopf*, in a manner that was not at all bellicose. We went at the quick march, eyes front, knowing well that we, the prisoners, were the victors.

Our squad had a fine appearance. We had selected the best-looking and tidiest of our men. Three of our medical officers, MM. Jeandidier of Longwy, Romant of Marseilles, and Bouvat of Ardèche, sturdy figures all, marched at the head, immediately behind the wreath. Eight Bavarians with fixed bayonets escorted us. Lacking their spiked helmets, which they had been compelled to hand over to men in the fighting-line, still with the countryman's slouch, for drill had not yet had time to take effect, their stiff legs finding it difficult to accommodate themselves to our brisk French pace, these peasant farmers and agricultural labourers made a poor show. This also gave us pleasure. Among these good Swabians, our feelings were much like those of the Athenians in Bœotia.

But Georg, who marches at my left as a supernumerary, wears a helmet. Dapper, authoritative, disdainfully chiding his compatriots, he feels that his mere presence serves to atone for the humble and awkward bucolicism of the escort. At the cemetery he uncovers; he marshals us around the sixty French graves. He follows the Latin prayers with a thoughtful air. When, in accordance with a suggestion made by M. Langlois, we then go to pray beside the graves of the German soldiers, his eyes are moist. He remains dignified.

When the commemoration is over, and when, the rest

of the little troop having started back for the fort, the three medical officers, with Durupt, Détry, and myself, go for a walk through the town under Georg's supervision, he suddenly declares himself in a great hurry to return.

"By the commandant-major's orders we must be at Orff for dinner!"

"But it is only four o'clock!"

"We've a long way to walk."

"Anyhow, by the commandant-major's orders we have to go to the bank, the bookseller, the tailor, and the surgical instrument maker."

"Order? It is not an order. You can hardly call it a permission!"

"Never mind."

So we go to the Königliche Bayerische Bank, where, in exchange for good French gold, we receive packets of one mark notes; to the military tailor, who, with the assistance of a plump and smiling wife, does his best to find for us among the German reds one that sufficiently resembles our scarlet; to the bookseller, whose window is beplastered with picture postcards of Zeppelins flying over the Place de l'Opéra, of battles, of soldiers in the death agony thinking of their fiancées (figured in the corner of the card haloed in shining clouds); to the surgical instrument maker, where Détry, our dentist, is careful not to supply all his needs on this occasion, desiring an excuse for another visit to the town.

The boot-polisher hustles us on. Here we are in the street, three in front, three behind, flanked by Georg's bayonet.

All at once, seeing a pastrycook's window, with a grand display of buns and tarts beneath the lamps, with one impulse, without stopping to parley, we hurl ourselves, all six, into the *Conditorei*. Georg invokes all the devils of hell, but follows us. "Mange," says Détry to him, forcing him to sit down at a table loaded with custard tartlets and éclairs. And we, who have been craving for sweet things for months, begin to devour all that comes to our hands. Trembling with concupiscence, I go to the counter, I take the mistress by the hand, and, my mouth full, say to her: "Madame, you will be an angel if you can get me two pounds of butter!" She does not sell butter, but a mother is never able to resist the cry of a child, and she lets me have her own butter. "I can buy some more," she says with a smile. I open the show-cases: "Hullo, Suchard! How much this pile?" She names the price. "There you are." Then I spy some little sponge-cakes coated with sugar. In a trice I have filled my haversack, which I carry beneath my coat. Big-bellied as a Bavarian, I am unable to rebutton.

"*Vorwärts!*" cries Georg, stuffed with good things. We pay our shot. Leaving the pastrycook's we overwhelm our gaoler with prayers: "Do let us go to the ham and beef shop, to the tobacconist. . . ."—"It's absolutely impossible," he cries. In reality, he dreads losing his commission! He marches on at a terrible rate, kicking out of the way, driving out of the way with the butt end of his musket, the escorting rabble of children. It is only two young girls of really charming

appearance, ten or twelve years of age, who walked by my side on the way to the cemetery and to whom I said, "I have sisters of your age who are like you," that continue to accompany me, notwithstanding the roughness of the *Bursch*. We talk like old friends. They leave us at the wicket of the cavalry barracks, with a parting "*Grüß Gott, Herr Franzose!*"

My companions are still arguing with Georg. "It won't take a minute to buy a dozen packets of tobacco and a string of sausages!" The innocents! They reason with Georg. Durupt especially, who is eloquent in the Teutonic tongue, surpasses himself. "To be at the source of all good things and not to drink from it! To pass stupidly by!"—"Ne, ne," the *Bursch* growls continually. Now we are traversing badly lighted streets. We make our way through the suburbs, and beyond the station we reach the dull country on the outskirts of the town.

"Old fellow," says Détry to Durupt, "we are greatly indebted to you. With all your German, you have not been smart enough to get us the smallest of sausages, a single pipefull of tobacco! It is obvious, O Durupt the Just, that you do not know the only language in which it is possible to persuade Georg!"

We are about to reach a tavern. Détry, who does not know a word of German, lays a hand on the orderly's shoulder. Abstracting Georg's hat, he puts it on his own head and decorates the Bavarian with the French képi. Georg beams! Then Détry shakes him vigorously by the hand, saying: "Tiens, mon poteau! voilà



pour graisser ta sale patte.”<sup>1</sup> Georg does not understand French, but he understands very well that he has two marks in his hand. Arm in arm, the two comrades lead the way. In front of the inn, Détry loudly calls, “*Bier, Bier!*” The innkeeper comes forth, wearing a military uniform. All smiles, he invites us to enter. We place two mugs in the hands of Georg and lay before him a plate of steaming sausages. In this rig, with his rifle and fixed bayonet against his shoulder, he is irresistible. I make the tour of the *Wirtschaft* and discover a number of plates charged with slices of cold meats ready for a battalion which is about to pass on its way to the Russian front. “How much, *gnädige Frau?*”—“Fifty pfennig a plate.”

What a dinner we ate! It was not a varied menu, but quantity made up for everything. The joy of it! You who have never been hungry, you who have never been rationed, cannot understand how it is that there is no delight in the world greater than that of finding oneself, after three months’ imprisonment, in front of plates filled with sausage, salad of ox muzzles, and gherkins. The *Wirt* had a swarm of children. We treated the children. We overwhelmed them with pfennig. We paid the most polite compliments to the *gnädige Frau Wirtin*.

Es zogen drei Bursche wohl über den Rhein,  
Bei einer Frau Wirtin da kehrten sie ein. . . .

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<sup>1</sup> There, old chum! There’s something to grease your dirty palm!

We were intoxicated, not with beer, but with the feeling of plenty. We ordered cigars. "Have you boxes of cigars?"—"Here you are."—"How much?"—"And this cluster of sausages? Can I buy them? How much?" We made a clean sweep. Georg continued to eat and to drink, amid a rain of friendly smiles and pats on the back. All of us being thoroughly replete, we resumed our journey. There was a thick fog. Two companies of the Bavarian battalion in full marching kit, on the way to entrain, met us. They went by, walking heavily, without a word. We were singing.

Détry made Georg repeat some French phrases :

"Mademoiselle, voulez-vous danser?"

"Non, môssieu, *ch'ai* mal au pied."

Master and pupil kicked up their legs in unison. We held our sides with laughter. To tell the truth, this unwonted good cheer had turned our heads a little.

Détry was pelting Durupt with gibes. "Old Aristides the Just, you will never know how to manage men. Georg is like all the Bavarians in our guard—he thinks first of all of his own skin, and next he likes to enjoy himself. Don't you talk to me about German honour and German virtue. These fellows are very fond of sonorous phrases, but they can't resist a modest tip!" No doubt Détry was exaggerating a little.

Georg is no longer gay. Closed, alas, his Fort Orff campaign, his campaign of junketings and sensual enjoyments. Now he is to have a taste of real war. Poor Georg, if only his imaginary wound of Dieuze

could suffice. Certainly he loves German "glory," German "virtue." Certainly he loves his king. But he loves just as much to be cock of the walk in the villages, with the aid of French money! He loves the fatherland and military displays. But he loves also to feed well and to lie warm. He is fond of so many things that he always chooses the nearest and the easiest, and his actions are invariably dictated by opportunity.

Now he is to go to the firing-line. In a few days he will be rotting in the trenches, his boots sticking fast in the clay. Despite the best will in the world, he may be laid low by a bullet before he has found a favourable opportunity of getting himself safely taken prisoner by the French. His name will then appear in the lists among those of the heroes who have fallen on the field of honour. Such is life!

But how will my dear little Brissot manage in future to procure chocolate and Baltic herrings?

*November 13, 1914.*

## OUR GAOLER

ON Sunday, Baron von Stengel went to the Palatinate to buy horses for the artillery. He returned yesterday evening, after an absence of five days, looking a little thinner, his eyes weeping from a cold in the head. The weather in the transrhenish province had been wintry. The railway service was irregular, so he was compelled to make use of an open motor. During the first snows he had to drive about the country visiting horse-dealers. He is seventy years of age.

He has just been walking up and down with us, and recounting to us the incidents of this unexpected journey. "I tired myself out to no advantage," he said. "Horses are becoming rare with us, almost as rare as louis d'or. You have Algeria, Boulonnais, the region round Tarbes, and the splendid horse-breeding centre of Huysne. We have nothing of the kind. The question of remounts is becoming serious. It has been difficult to buy even a few horses in the Palatinate. Sorry screws, and dear at that! The peasants asked

from two to three thousand marks for horses worth eight hundred at the outside."

. . . . .

Our commandant is very tall and upright, with a finely cut jaw, and a round flat beard like the knights in the days of Maximilian of Austria. His manners are above criticism. His natural dignity is relieved by a genial expression of countenance.

He has the equable temper and regulated life of a sage. Precise but never punctilious, he fulfils here the duties of postmaster, money-changer, censor of correspondence, headmaster, major-domo—and does it all without irritability and without giving the impression that he is lowering himself in any way. In his bold, firm, regular, almost heraldic handwriting, he registers the arrival and departure of letters ; he enters in the account-book payments we make for haberdashery ; he keeps memoranda of the interminable series of money-orders. He works deliberately, making neat rows of figures, using a ruler whenever he wishes to draw a line, and taking great care not to ink his long white fingers or to make blots on the large folios of ministerial paper. There is not a speck of dust on his writing-table ; everything is neatly laid out in squares, as in a French garden. Behind him, on the top of the closed wash-hand stand, a lemon, cut in two exactly equal halves, a loaf of ration bread, cut with precision, and a glass of fresh water, combine to form a picture as definite and sober as a scene of still life by Chardin. The casemate is well-lighted, vast, and in

keeping with its tenant. A narrow iron bedstead, a trunk, a clothes-hanger upon which are seen a *Mütze*, a long grey cape, and a sword; two deal tables standing end to end, one for himself and the other for d'Arnoult, his secretary; a small dressing-table, three chairs—this comprises all the furniture. In this formal, cold, geometrical environment sits the huge man (much too large for his table, so that his arms and legs are cramped), writing all day.

Humble work, well within the capacity of any honest "swivel-officer" of the reserve. But Baron von Stengel, bending his long back to it, infusing it with his air of refinement, stamps it with an almost hieratic character. It is possible that he would prefer to be in command of a park of artillery upon the Warthe or upon the Ypres canal. Perhaps he envies his two sons, captains in the army of Lorraine, who have just announced to him almost simultaneously the receipt of the iron cross. But this much is certain, that it is not without sadness that he recalls the last war.

He thinks of the 1870 campaign, which, as *Ober-leutnant*, he spent at Ulm, employed, as to-day, in guarding prisoners. He thinks of his young colleagues of those days, of the interminable conversations when they were all intoxicated with the glorious news that streamed in, the news of Wörth, Borny, Gravelotte, Metz, and Sedan. He recalls the ardency of those years, and the cheerful noise of his steps as he walked beside the Danube in the beautiful night-time. He remembers seeing in the river the reflection of the

cathedral spire, graceful and ornate, a silent witness of the ancient German glories then renascent—victory, love.

He was an old man when the new call to arms came. Nevertheless he offered his services to King Louis ; though a septuagenarian, he begged to be allowed to help. Hence he is at Fort Orff. To one who watches him at work, censoring our letters, doing our little banking business, fulfilling the thousand and one trifling duties of his office, it is obvious that he is performing a rite, the great rite of patriotism.

Although hungry men are seldom just, I have never heard any of the prisoners utter a single ill-natured word about the commandant. As he walks with slow gait along the parapet, every one salutes him with manifest goodwill. White-headed, wearing an ample grey cloak falling in straight folds, he looks like a patriarch of ancient days visiting his faithful tribe. He wields authority so naturally, and is so free from hauteur, that no one dreams of murmuring. He has worked the miracle of uniting in a sentiment of respect for his personality all the inhabitants of this little France of Fort Orff, this miniature of great France, the factious and ungovernable nation, the nation of eternal discontent. He is so obviously straightforward and humane that the most savage of our prisoners would protest if any one, suddenly seized by an evil whim, should desire to make this good old man of the great century responsible for our short commons.

The major in command at headquarters in Ingolstadt, on the other hand, who must be a jingo of the

most pronounced type, is prodigal of petty vexations. He forbids tobacco, chocolate, and sugar, "articles of luxury." He forbids the foundation of a canteen; he forbids the receipt of more than ten marks at a time, and the writing of more than one letter every ten days; he forbids pen and ink; he forbids access to the escarp and to the summit of the slopes, doubtless considering the view too beautiful for prisoners of war. He issues orders that the sentinels shall fire without challenge upon any who break his rules, and it was owing to this that Georg, being taken for a Frenchman, was shot at one evening in the gloaming. Every day a new *Verboten* is issued.

Amid this maze of prohibitions, our life would be a torture but for Baron von Stengel. Discreet and tactful as he is, those among us who come into close contact with him know with how much disgust, with how much suppressed annoyance, he receives these vexatious orders. He carries them out, being too good a soldier to disobey. But, too good a soldier to misuse soldiers, too much of a gentleman to treat as galley-slaves combatants seamed with wounds, holy priests, red cross men who have received their baptism of fire, he often carries out his orders in a way which is tantamount to a generous evasion.

He is an adept in the art of humanizing his agents, the *Feldwebel* and the soldiers of the Bavarian guard. Unfortunately these are changed every week, and every week therefore he has to begin this civilizing task anew. The men come to us white hot from reading the news-



papers, in savage mood—"duty, duty." For two days the fort is an inferno. Then everything returns to order—not German order, but our own. Their zeal is mitigated when they take note of the way in which the commandant treats us. Our hail-fellow-well-met air, our good-humoured cheek, do the rest. The soldiers are tamed. Soon they cease to guard us ; they contemplate us, and take part in our life. There they stand, with fixed bayonets, somewhat nonplussed and puzzled, almost timid, abashed as it were, hardly knowing, when we dig them in the ribs, whether we are fond of them or are making fun of them. At bottom they feel themselves to be our inferiors, less lively and less intelligent. They all have much the same idea as fat Max, the canteen keeper, who secretly breaks the pumps whenever a fresh levy is being made, in order to render himself more indispensable here than at the front. In view of the activity of our comrades, their carvings in wood and in stone, the tin rings they make, the horse-hair watch-chains, the stools, tables, and cupboards which they knock together out of bits of planking filched from the workyards at Ingolstadt, this mighty beer-drinker is unable to control his astonishment. He waves his great arms, exclaiming :

"These Frenchmen, what workers ! I've always maintained, *Herr Gott Sakrament*, that every one of them has a devil in his inside."

M. von Stengel is of much the same way of thinking as Max.

Little as he seems to notice, wishing, as he does,

to avoid having to allot punishment, hardly anything happens in the fort without his being aware of it. Nothing licit or illicit escapes his keen gaze, and what he does not see he divines. Nevertheless, with the roguish indulgence of a grand seigneur, he is careful to avoid any display of anger. I am confident that he derives a good deal of secret enjoyment from the contemplation of the network of customs, subterfuges, and evasions, whose threads are interwoven behind the iron grating of German regulations. He watches with amusement the supple boldness with which prudent advances are made, the care with which direct conflict with authority is avoided, and the ingenuity with which the regulations are taken in the flank, circumvented, or ignored. He admires the stratagems by means of which this miniature France, prisoned in a foreign fortress, is enabled to reintegrate the life of the homeland. He does not fail to recognize that these breaches of discipline serve, even more clearly than the ingenuity with which the breaches are effected, to manifest the hardihood of his prisoners, and to prove their possession of an individuality at once gentle and intractable.

This German, at any rate, does not regard the French as "monkeys." He is not misled by their superficial levity, their suppleness, their apparent scepticism—shining armour with which they protect their ego, a vivacious and rebellious ego, which resists everything, which always gets even, is ever elastic, artful, or frank, as circumstances prescribe, but immalleable, incapable of being passive, obstinately itself. The commandant

is impressed with the fact that the Frenchman is what he is and remains what he is, jealous of his privacy, greatly prizing his own humour, tastes, and ideas. It may be that M. von Stengel considers that we are excessively individualized, that whilst we often seem to treat grave matters as trifles, the least onslaught upon our intimate personality arouses in us an excess of fury, a revolt which may go so far as to compromise the collective interest. But it is certain that he knows us and accepts us as we are. He imposes no constraint, and has no desire to refashion us after the Teuton model. It is even possible that he regards with secret approval the delicate compost of national merits and peculiarities. In any case, in his relations with us he is extremely careful to do everything he can to blunt the sharp, harassing, and painful angles of Germanic discipline.

Nevertheless this man, so sensible, moderate, and well-bred, does not possess a perfectly unified character. One recognizes in him both the German and the natural man. The former enunciates cynical maxims to the latter, insisting, for example, upon the value of war for war's sake. The latter listens, but shies at the idea. It is as if, while enjoying the refined sweetness of a French morning, he should suddenly be disturbed by the horrid bellowing of all the war-horns of the Huns. The dicta of this brutal philosophy rack his ears. But, being good-mannered, he hearkens. His brother seems to him a thick-skinned fellow, coarse-blooded, grim, and savage-hearted. However, he makes no protest. His

brother reiterates his statements, repeats his massive assertions loudly and unceasingly, and insists upon agreement. He has to pay for being well-mannered, for hating scenes, for disliking to give pain. From very kindness of heart, from love of peace, from very sensitiveness, he assumes a barbaric mask. The good brother ! It goes much against the grain, but he gives an apparent assent.

It is thanks to a series of such sacrifices, invariably one-sided, that the German and the natural man seem, in Baron von Stengel, to live on harmonious terms.

His natural man is good and just. Making no parade of humanitarian convictions, he practises humaneness.

It is touching to watch this grand old man, lofty of stature, with a solid prognathous chin, irreproachably dressed, when he stops to speak to a soldier suffering from despondency. "Fous êtes triste?" he asks in his slow and broken French, gently pulling the man by the ear. The prisoner does not misunderstand ; he knows that though the major can read French he is unable to speak it, and that in this laconic phrase he desires to condense an entire friendly conversation.

A few days ago, having learned that a loaf of bread priced at thirty pfennig had been sold at one mark fifty pfennig to a prisoner by a soldier of the guard, he was greatly enraged, and in the presence of Durupt, who was helping him to write up the register of money orders, he exclaimed, "There is but one price for bread, and I shall proceed with the utmost rigour against any-

one, be he French or German, who asks a higher price. It is disgraceful to rob prisoners in this way!" The joke is that officially we are not supposed to buy anything at all.

The day before yesterday there was a fall of sleet. The men were loitering up and down the corridors. In front of the *Kommandantur* there was a great clatter of hobnailed shoes, and the noise was reinforced by light songs, laughter, and chatter. The commandant was reading our eleven hundred letters. Two days earlier he had sent them to Ingolstadt. Headquarters, cantankerous as usual, had returned them, under some pretext, to be re-read. This was something calculated to put the gentlest of men out of humour. Scrupulously obedient to orders, he was now for the second time reading these poor papers, badly written in pencil, insipid, and all exactly alike. On the other side of the door, the procession of prisoners passed and repassed unceasingly. The clatter of nails on the cement got on his nerves. "Oh, the noise, the noise!" he said, as if speaking to himself. D'Arnoult was there and rose from his seat, intending to ask the comrades to be a little quieter. The commandant stopped him, saying, "No, monsieur d'Arnoult, do not go out. *Mein Zimmer ist doch nur eine Kanzlei*—after all, my room is only an office!" And once more he immersed himself in his reading.

Withal, in the major's innermost being, the natural man invariably acts and governs. The other, the German, merely utters professions of faith.

Out walking, just now, we had paused for a moment, dazzled by the beauty of the evening. We were on the strip of greyish-white pasture which arches along the edge of the pine wood, and looked like the woolly back of a sheep. Before us, seemingly at our very feet, the Danubian plain, with its gentle undulations, stretched away through the iridescent haze. The sun had just set. A breeze was blowing from the west, chasing before it golden mist-wreaths. The branches and faded foliage of the oaks, dry and nipped by the frost, rustled in the chill wind; the pine needles, interlaced with gossamer, reddened by many sunsets, whispered and murmured. We were a silent company, Baron von Stengel, Major Langlois, MM. Jeandidier, Cavaillé, Lœbre, Romant, Bouvat, my friend Laloux, and myself. The vastness of the prospect, the silence of the fields, the fading of the light, the shivering of the undergrowth in the twilight, the strange sensation of being suddenly plunged into the heart of winter—all these influences combined to keep us mute.

What a waste of time! I thought. Already three months in prison. Three months lost beyond recall. And the baron had just said to me, "England is intractable. I hardly think you will get away before next autumn." More than a year lived through for nothing, suffered for nothing. A whole year cut out from the short span of our days. I was prey to a cold, hard sadness. Then, my thoughts turned to you. . . . All at once a song rose from the road. The recruits

quartered at Hepperg were returning to quarters, marching with that slow and heavy German pace which will never be a match for our French step.

They were singing the famous

Nun ade, wir müssen Abschied nehmen . . .

with which all the *Feldgrau*, before going to the front, have made the quiet Bavarian taverns ring, sitting over their great tankards, each holding the beloved one's hand. I was familiar with the strains. The little sergeant of whom I have previously written to you had made his men sing it to me one evening in the guardroom, and had copied out the text for me :

Now farewell. We must take leave. We must charge our muskets. With stout hearts we shall give to the war and to the fields of battle the finest days of our youth. Farewell, dear parents, brothers, and sisters. Shake hands for the last time. If we are never to meet again, let us hope for a reunion in a better world.

Farewell, best beloved, you who know that our parting is harder to bear than death. It may be that we shall never meet again. Yet every day, when night falls, let us renew our hopes.

The shells are whistling through the air. The bayonets are fixed. The flags are waving in the breeze. Our dread is concealed beneath the smoke of the combat. As we fight we cry, hurrah, hurrah !

We are in the thick of it, like good Bavarians.

"What are you thinking about, my dear enemy?" said von Stengel all at once with a smile.—"*Herr Kommandant*," I replied, in an access of dull rage,

"*dieser Krieg wird die grosse Schande Europas sein!*"<sup>1</sup>

Slowly, to suit the baron, we descended the incline, soft beneath our feet, the turf torn, and littered with fragments of shell; here and there grew handsome stone-pines with twisted trunks. Being unable to run, I was shivering in my summer clothing. We took the road beside the hop-garden, and as we walked the baron gave me his views upon the war.

In truth, all he did was to repeat the words of Harnack, Lujo Brentano, Troeltsch, Willamovitz-Moellendorff, and the hundred representatives of German Kultur. As I listened, I seemed to be re-reading the articles which these writers were now publishing in the war editions of the *Internationale Monatsschrift*:

"Germany has never desired anything but peace; William is the peace emperor; Sir Edward Grey is the villain of the drama; English commercialism led to the war; Germany was suddenly seized by the throat and had to defend herself; she is engaged in a life and death struggle. . . .

"*Ueber welches Volk wird einst das Tribunal der Weltgeschichte den Urtheilsspruch 'Schuldig' fallen? Eins ist gewiss! Deutschland kann dem Urtheilsspruch mit reinem Gewissen entgegen sehen.*"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This war will be the greatest stain on the history of Europe!

<sup>2</sup> "Upon what nation, in days to come, will the verdict of 'guilty' be passed by the tribunal of world history? One thing, at least, is certain. Germany can look forward to the verdict with a clear conscience." (Otto von Gierke, *Internationale*



I had no interest in all this. If the major had been a man of my own age, I should have bluntly begged him to spare me these phrases of the good bourgeois who has just been reading the newspapers. I should have said to him: "In actual fact, our respective countries are at war. Let us leave it to our grandchildren, should they have a fancy for writing history, to ascertain who is responsible for this butchery. But as far as I am myself concerned, be good enough to consider me a man of sound intelligence, and don't attempt to befool me with your political myths. I agree that these myths have their uses, and that they are necessary for the soldier. To him one must lie perforce. Above all, in our democratic epoch, the violent man does wisely to wear sheep's clothing, and to give himself the air of defending civilization and humanity, for otherwise the citizen would never be willing to play the part of soldier. If needs must, the citizen will allow himself to be killed for the sake of principles, or in defence of hearth and home, but

*Monatschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst, und Technik*, November 1, 1914, 3rd *Kriegsheft*, "Deutsches Recht und Deutsche Kraft.") At this identical time, the Protestant theologians of England, in the celebrated letter they sent to Adolf von Harnack, assured that illustrious German historian and personal friend of William II: "*Doch wir sind der festen Ueberzeugung, dass Grossbritannien in diesem Kampfe für Recht und Gewissen, für Europa, die Menschheit und dauernden Frieden fecht.*" ["We are, however, firmly convinced that, in this struggle, Great Britain is fighting for right and conscience, for Europe, humanity, and permanent peace."] It is a remarkable fact that throughout Europe every one has a "clear conscience"!

never for the interest of the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, or a business corporation. Agreed, the aggressor must lie.

"But we are not now on a public platform; we are not composing a proclamation. Do not let us deceive ourselves, nor soil our minds with a superfluous falsehood."

But to this old man I said nothing of the sort. I listened patiently. The wind bit my ears, and my body seemed a vast Siberia. As I walked, I looked at the birches, each one of which was known to me individually. Their delicate ramifications, now leafless, hung like horses' manes. But the youngest trees, those whose tresses were not yet grown, so that their branches pointed directly upwards like the twigs of an ill-made besom, still retained some sparse foliage. In the icy wind, the white of their stems standing out against the greenish-black of the acacias in the ditch had a somewhat funereal air.

"War," said von Stengel, "is an essential condition of social life. Without war, the human race would become anæmic, would slip back into barbarism, ignorance, and hebetude. Even though man loves peace, he must also be a great fighter before the Lord, *ein Streiter vor dem Herrn*. Do not imagine that wars are the work of a few men; the ferment works in the very heart of the race, and when this happens the maintenance of peace becomes impossible. The friction is so great, the heat generated is so intense, that the flames burst forth spontaneously.

Then patience is out of place, and it is necessary to unsheathe the sword. Blood, much blood, must flow to appease the fierce angers and to restore men to their customary calm."

It was the German in Baron von Stengel, not the man, who spoke, enunciating the doctrine that war is necessary, that war is a natural function of social life.

"For the rest," he added, humanizing to the best of his ability the myth formulated by the German, for now the natural man was resuming sway, "once war has broken out, it is the duty of us all to do our best to diminish its horrors. Men differ widely, and yet, through contact with upright and noble characters, even the worst of human beings, even those of malignant and dark nature, come to learn the value of peace, of good understanding, and acquire the faculty of enduring with equanimity."

Thus talking, we reached the great iron gate, adorned with the Bavarian lions. I rang. The gate was opened, the baron drew aside to allow his "boarders" to pass in, and these in turn signalled to him to take precedence.

The commandant major, Baron Stefan von Stengel, very erect, head held high, passed through the gateway. The guard, fully armed, stood at attention, lined up in two rows. Upon an order from the *Feldwebel*, "*Hurrah für den Major*," twenty recruits shouted with a single voice. Night had fallen. All the windows of the fort, which had been invisible as long as we were outside the walls, were now seen to be lighted up, and the red of

the bricks was manifest in the starlight. We crossed the drawbridge. "Now that the snows have come," said the commandant, pointing to the ditch, "we could make a good skating-rink there." He saluted, and withdrew into his casemate.

As a matter of fact, I have not entirely lost my time here, since I have succeeded in classifying adequately in the social hierarchy such a man as Baron von Stengel, who is neither hero nor genius, who has no ambition to display supernatural virtues, but who is simply a man with pleasant manners, refined, well-bred, free from all stiffness, easy to get on with, a truly civilized being.

You, my friends, have spoiled me. It is owing to you that I had always remained ignorant how restricted is the genus of "decent folk." The war has changed my views in this respect. Hardened, simplified, freer in relation to external conditions, as adaptable as any one could wish—when the campaign is over I shall be somewhat less confiding than of yore towards my kind. Now that I sample them in the mass, elbowing them unceasingly morning, noon, and night throughout the entire day of twenty-four hours, listening to them as they talk, chatter, grumble, quarrel, and snore, looking on at them while they enjoy themselves, complain, play, eat, sleep, bargain, pull out the personal stop, pass judgments, take things at their ease; now that I no longer contemplate them through the prism of my doctrines and of my leniency,

but look at them as they really are, all the scenery of civil life removed, all social trappings stripped off—there are certain categories of mind which I understand better than before. I understand better, for example, hermits, misanthropes, jansenists, and all pessimists, pagan as well as Christian, all those who can see nothing in man but the primitive beast, and those who never cease talking of original sin. How greatly now do I prize good manners, the veneer of culture, the mask of decency. These are but externals, things which do not give expression to man's intimate nature. They even aim at veiling that nature. But precisely because they exercise this occlusive and embellishing function, they seem to me august. The sight of the real arouses an appetite for fiction, creates a necessity for art and for dreams. Are these lies? Yes, they are lies, poor lies! What matter? Must we live in hell by deliberate choice? It cannot be asserted that such illusions make a paradise of our ill-conditioned and sordid world; but at least they mitigate the stench to some extent, neutralize its offensiveness, and render the bestial hustle a thought less aggressive.

My nose is still uneasy with the memory of the carrion odour from the battlefields of Moncourt, Lagarde, and Kerprich. It was here that I learned the value of shroud, coffin, quicklime, and tomb. Now that I have come to know men better, I know also that the trifling restraints and delicate veils of conventional good manners are absolutely essential.

*November 20, 1914.*

## THE SLOPES ARE FORBIDDEN

SNOW has been falling throughout the night. Risking a shot, for the new orders from headquarters are still more stringent, I walked for a good hour at dawn upon the northern ramparts. When the sun rose over the village of Hepperg there was sketched in the opposite quarter, towards France, in three strokes of the brush, the most striking of pastels: in the foreground, the old gold of the oaks, flaming, sanguine, and burnished: in the middle distance, the wide field of virgin snow; in the background, the heavy and sombre line of the pines, interspersed with larches, sparkling with hoar-frost.

Solitude amid inanimate things, in the morning, restores me to the tranquil possession of myself, induces a peaceful, strong, and simple happiness which neither the society of my fellows, nor meditation, nor prayer can ever furnish. At one time this calm, as of Eden, used to terrify me. It seemed to me impious. When, as a youth, I loitered among the wild oak-groves which form scattered oases amid the limestone mazes of Païolive in Vivarais, it seemed to me that

their shade was stifling my faith, that the seated giants of white stone, amid which the Ardèche has hollowed its precipitous channel, were swallowing my Christian dogmas, and that my Eliacin-like fervours were evaporating into the torrid sky, passing upward with the furnace breath which rises in summer from this formidable landscape.

Since then, however, I have learned to feel no doubt regarding the primacy of man vis-à-vis the grandeur of inanimate things.

No, my delight in natural scenery is by no means pantheistic. I believe too firmly in the hierarchy of creation, and I am too strongly imbued with the Christian conception that man is a person, as it were a son of God, an absolute individuality, inviolable, raised above life and death, to be able to lose my sense of personal identity in the contemplation of rocks, fields, and woodlands. It is simply that I love fresh air and open spaces; I love the lineaments of nature, which are more beautiful than the doings of men; I love the society of the meadows and of the trees, a society which is less importunate and talkative than that of my fellows, and which never fails to restore me to myself. Perhaps, moreover, I tend instinctively to idolize colour and light, seeing that God has concentrated in my eyes, above all, the power of sensuous appreciation.

This morning I was interested in watching the gambols of an ermine which had just captured a small black mammal. Supple, slim, and snake-like,

it sat up from time to time to look around. It was hard to distinguish, despite its black tail-tip, from the surrounding snow, though this had a bluish tint in contrast with the ermine's fur, in which there were subtle shades of green. I stood motionless on the footpath, wrapped in the soft cloak which Mme. Paul Weiss has just sent me. The little beast advanced fearlessly towards me, joyously shaking the prey that it carried in its jaws. Did it take me for a tree?

I move my barberry switch. The ermine stops. Sitting up, it looks at me for a long time. How pretty it is, slender and graceful! I think of Musette, a black English greyhound, with perfect points, which won the first prize at Lyons, and was the delight of my eyes for three years. Dear Musette! We were always together. The first time we were parted she died. Madeleine, my favourite little sister, was charged with giving me the news. She wrote me a letter of eight pages. I still recall her great childish handwriting. Her kind heart had inspired the most touching precautions, and suggested the use of angelic phraseology. "We have buried her," she wrote in conclusion, "in that corner of the garden you are so fond of, beneath the oleanders."

I continue to look at the ermine, but the animal is doubtless ready for breakfast. Evading the danger, it descends the slope, gains the traverse, and runs restlessly to and fro. I trouble it. Most probably I am between it and its earth. I go.

As I make my way on to the escarp I meet



Noverraz, the Parisian, the hero of the look-out episode. He is taking a constitutional in the snow. His waxen skin, pinched by the cold, has red patches on it. His ears and the tip of his nose are scarlet.

"Where have you been?" he inquires.

"Beyond the slopes. I must have walked quite a league this morning. It was glorious!"

"Take care, old chap, if you value a whole skin."

"Bah!"

"My dear fellow, this is what happened to me on Thursday morning. It must have been about half-past eight. I am taking a walk with my chums of casemate 23. There is a regular London fog. All at once, at the bottom of the west court, we hear the jabber of Boche. I imagine that it is the disciplinary company breaking stones, as usual, in front of the battery. Durand, however, clambers up the slope. After peering over the edge, he makes signs to us to join him. On the road that runs by the ditch are two sections, standing at ease in columns of fours. Their officer is on horseback, wearing a huge grey cloak. He is making a speech to his men. My attention is riveted by the word *Frankreich*. I scramble a little higher. Stretched at full length, my head just above the edge, among the grass, I listen with all my ears: 'Get this firmly fixed in your minds,' says the captain, 'for we must not fail to learn all we can from these French rascals [*diese Lumpen von Franzosen*]. Let me repeat: they climb into the trees; they install their machine guns among

the branches ; they wait there in absolute silence. The German scouts have examined the ground only. Our men pass by. Then comes a sound like thunder ! We are mowed down from behind by a rain of bullets. Such are the tricks of these monkeys ! Well, let us meet ruse by ruse, stratagem by stratagem. Listen carefully. You are at the front. You dig your trench, the admirable German trench. You settle yourself there comfortably. You are invulnerable. Thence, quite at your ease and without danger, you can fire at the French lines. Is this all ? No. In advance of your real trench, eighty or a hundred yards away, you hastily dig another trench. You fill it with dummies. It is quite easy—any old rags of clothing will do. These pigs of Frenchmen [*diese Sauleute, dieses Schweinvolk*] can fire at this as long as they please. Then, when the assault comes, when they rush into this hole thinking that they've got you, you have an admirable target, at short range, and you can quietly exterminate them.'

"Such are the officer's words. At this moment one of his men asks a question, and I take the opportunity of changing my position, so that I am exposed down to the waist. The captain catches sight of me. After glaring at me for a moment, he demands a rifle, shoulders it, and fires. Nothing happens ; the breech is empty. We do not budge. The captain is furious. 'Give me a cartridge !' He loads the rifle and shoulders it once more. My comrades and I are about to take cover behind the slope when the shot

is fired. It must be a blank cartridge, for we hear no whistle of a bullet. The Boches burst out laughing. Corporal Durand, standing erect with folded arms, gazes at them mockingly. He intends to stay there. 'My good man,' I exclaim, 'hurry up and get down!' The captain is asking for another cartridge. 'This time,' I say, 'it will probably be a bullet!'

"There you have it. This is exactly what happened. I did not lose a word or a gesture. You had better be careful. With your mania for ranging the outer regions of the fort, you will get your skin perforated one fine morning."

November 27, 1914.

## A BLACK MOOD

A PREY to depression, we are smoking in the "Salle du Jeu de Paume." Laloux and Badoy, otherwise known as Badozus, are playing an interminable game of chess; d'Arnoult is reading Victor Hugo's *Histoire d'un crime*; Noverraz is dozing over Balzac's *Chouans*; Sergeant Scherrer, tall and thin, with cold eye and Mephistophelian head, is playing draughts with Massé, a non-commissioned officer of artillery. Seated upon the drawers of the drug cupboard, they are crowded round the solitary lamp. The table is of deal, oblong in shape, one that can be used as an operating-table. Their heads are in shadow. Elbow to elbow and forehead to forehead, the six men are silent. The circle of light is hazy with blue whorls rising from their pipes.

Standing in the embrasure of the window, I am smoking my own Bavarian pipe. There is not a sound in the room, nor in the passages, nor on the bridge close to our windows. Depression must reign supreme throughout the casemates, depression which paralyses mind and body.

How intense is the tedium, uncertainty, and anxiety! No letter for a whole fortnight. Yet she must be writing to me. And Léonce, my dear young brother. I wonder if it is as cold in the trenches at Ypres as it is in Bavaria. Shrapnel, bullets, sudden death. Shall I ever see him again? Is he still alive? Manech, the amiable corporal of No. 13, forty-two of whose Breton relatives have been engaged on the land front or at sea, has already lost six of them. The fighting priest, Gautin, has learned that the body of his brother lies rotting on the banks of the Marne. Sergeant Boullanger is mourning his father. Since we have begun to receive letters, almost every one is in mourning. Can it be that my own melancholy is a presentiment? When will it end, this sinister interlude in the book of peace, our book, our true book, the book of humanity?

Noverraz has fallen asleep over the *Chouans*; d'Arnoult, "le Chasseur," has closed *Histoire d'un crime*. He stretches and yawns. The others, huddled together, move their pieces without saying a word.

It is cold. All our thoughts ooze despondency. This brute of a major at headquarters who, meanly, by way of reprisal, has been detaining our letters at Ingolstadt for the last fortnight! Why cannot I throw off my troubles? This evening I am like a child, like a neglected schoolboy who has ceased to hear from his mother.

France, Paris, a blazing wood-fire in my study;

Douchka and Katia asleep on the hearthrug. She is there !

No, I am in Bavaria. I am a prisoner. I am at Fort Orff, at the edge of the Swabian forest, among gloomy villages where I know no one, where they believe that we are slaughtering their sons with dum-dum bullets, and that we were the aggressors. A Franconian blackguard is the man who feeds me. Then there is a little good-for-nothing school-master from Hof, a pedant stuffed with German idealism, who appeals to honour and humanity in season and out of season, who, having caught *flagrante delicto* a weaver of watch-chains snatching a few hairs from a horse's tail, gives him three days' close arrest, saying gravely, "A most inhumane act"—and it is this whipper-snapper, this round-shouldered and short-sighted impotent beast, who is my *Feldwebel*, "my superior officer"! He is a mean creature. Knowing that I am on good terms with von Stengel, he begged Dutrex to present me. Dutrex did so, saying: "*Hier ist unser Schriftsteller* [This is our author]"—"I am much honoured, monsieur; I have read an article on you in the *Nürnberg Zeitung*." He bowed and scraped again and again. He stood there, his ugly little moustache bristling with smiles, looking as great a booby as if he had been before the commandant. The quartermaster is a bad lot, but the *Feldwebel* is grotesque. And I am dependent upon the caprices of such men! I am a thing in the hands of these contemptible fellows, these hypocrites,

who loudly voice their patriotism and boast of the German virtues, while they are shamming rheumatism and heart-weakness to avoid being sent to the fighting-line. Sometimes I am seized with a longing to spit out my contempt in their very faces. Before Baron von Stengel one feels like a man; a noble master ennobles those subject to his orders. But before these subordinates all human nobility withers, wretched instruments who treat us as instruments in turn. Empowered to dominate and to humiliate us, to abuse us as much as they please, their favours are even worse than their severities; it is the brutal landowner in Latium amusing himself with a Græculus; it is the *Donaubauer*, the fat Danubian peasant, caressing his dog. I prefer their hatred.

The good Badoy, with his huge round head, his snub nose, his little curly beard, his large fatherly eyes, bends forward over the board, humps his back, and clenches his fists between his short legs, saying:

"When will it come to an end?"

"Which, the game or the imprisonment?" asks Laloux quietly, as he takes Badoy's queen.

"How can you ask?" Then, as if speaking to himself: "Oh! my wife and my three little ones, when shall I see them again? Still no letters! It's terrible."

From my corner in the window I contemplate the circle of smoke and of light, and I look at these six men packed together, chilly and sad. I dare not open

my lips. My depression is turning to gall. I am not far, this evening, from understanding certain scenes in the casemates which had astonished me, when taciturn men became suddenly exasperated, and, for a single word, hurled themselves on one another, fighting like horses without oats in a stable. Poor caged beasts ! The others, at least, those in Flanders and in France, have room to move. They have an object for action. After the stagnation of the trenches they can assuage their anger in the fury of the assault. But as for us, heavy with wrath, we are confined within thick walls ; we can but swing our frozen and idle arms ; we are cut off from all news ; we are the prey of dreams and of hunger. Outside the screened window, the ditch, the counterscarp, and the grating ; outside the grating, a Bavarian bayonet marches to and fro.

What can account for this state of nerves which I am unable to control ? The hour for the arrival of the postman has passed. I have been waiting all day. It has passed. There is nothing. I ought to be able to find a reason. Why am I outwardly so hard and inwardly near to weeping ? Suddenly there come great silent waves of memory. I hear her singing. She is dressed in green. The dark perfume of her golden hair enwraps me. The melody of César Franck's *Procession* rises athwart my fever ; it is broad, sweet, richer and more peaceful than a field of ripe wheat upon a warm evening. It sings within me ; it assumes the cadence of my breathing. I am stifling.



I live, I love, and I am loved ; and yet I am thrust out from life as if I were in the tomb.

Elbow to elbow and forehead to forehead, the six men at the table are silent. I look down upon the circle of light and the smoke of the pipes. Not a sound is to be heard. Buried in the mound, surrounded by meadows and woods, the fort is as cold and mute, as remote, desolate, and dead, as a soldier's grave in the corner of a field.

December 4, 1914.

## A FRANCONIAN QUARTERMASTER

THE "Salle du Jeu de Paume" was born, if I may use the expression, from a conjunction of coups d'état.

Day by day the quartermaster became more exasperated at the happiness of five Frenchmen. In accordance with the good German rules, they ought to have been sleeping upon the damp cement in the basement, which is really a dungeon. But since we have had palliasses, the house-surgeon, the apothecary, and their friends—Laloux, Badoy, Scherrer, Massé, and Noverraz—have been sleeping in the consulting-room, where they are masters. This first-floor casemate, adjoining the *Kommandantur*, is dry, has a boarded floor and a southern aspect. Every evening they made their beds side by side and slept the sleep of the just. M. von Stengel good-naturedly closed his eyes. The Bavarian guard, grateful for the castor oil and the cuppings of Laloux, did likewise. But Ploss, the reservist quartermaster, a Franconian stonemason who speaks of himself as a "sculptor in the building trade," was scandalized. He is a patriot, a flaming patriot—except

where his own skin is concerned. Called to the front a few weeks ago, he went to weep upon the commandant's bosom. The weeping gained its end, and he is still at Fort Orff.

Frenchmen sleeping dry, with plenty of room! Five Frenchmen bedded in a spacious casemate! Frenchmen passing night and day in the next room to the *Kommandantur*! Ploss' soul was desolate.

One morning he went to see Baron von Stengel, and declared that the casemate of the guard, which adjoins on the west the commandant's casemate, was too small, and that it was essential to use the consulting-room as an overflow. The consulting-room, divided in two by a wooden partition, could serve as a sort of office for the *Feldwebel* and for himself, the quartermaster; thus the faithful *Landwehrleute* would have the delight of guarding their dear *Herr Major* on both sides. The argument was irresistible. The *Herr Major* acquiesced. Intoxicated with delight, Ploss promptly went up and down the fort announcing the news everywhere, to the guard, to the interpreters, and to the banished men. Prouder even than M. de Morny after the 2nd of December, he luxuriated in his coup d'état.

The door of the room occupied by the six French medical officers opens into the same corridor as the *Kommandantur*, but on the other side of the main entrance. Laloux and his companions promptly go to knock at the door. They explain the situation. Next minute, M. Langlois, in full dress, wearing gloves, emerges. He descends upon M. von Stengel. He has

the most pressing need of a consulting-room, spacious, airy, and sunny! He is crafty, and as persistent as he is diplomatic. The baron agrees to let him have No. 46, the next room to the French officers. An obstinate defender of our rights, he demands in addition that the members of his staff, who give their services to French and Germans alike, shall have permission to sleep in their workroom. Permission is granted. He returns. Our exiles, whistling and singing joyously, hasten to remove their palliasses. Ploss watches them sourly; his coup d'état has missed fire. These French monkeys, they always fall on their feet! But what sort of a *Herr Major* is this, who can refuse them nothing?

Downstairs, in kitchen No. 22, another turn of fortune's wheel! The major from the Ingolstadt headquarters, who is but a Ploss with a commission, has been inspecting the fort, and has caught sight of the twin palliasses of Dutrex and Riou. Placed against the wall opposite the stoves, they have been an offence to him. "Clear out, messieurs!" What are we to do? Our places have been filled in our old casemates. We, too, visit M. Langlois. Hitting two birds with one stone, he includes us, as well as Durupt, the money-changer, d'Arnoult, the secretary, and Détry, the dentist, in his request to M. von Stengel. Thus the entire pharmaceutical staff and the whole French bureaucracy of Fort Orff are assigned to the consulting-room.

This happened ten days ago. Since then the victims

of the two coups d'état have furnished their quarters. They have adorned their windows with half curtains and have divided their casemate in two with a hanging of flowered lutestring. During the day they arrange their ten palliasses in two piles and cover them with rugs, so that in hours of despondency they have two imposing couches—thrones, as it were. At the very end of the room are the two tables, the one known as the "operating-table," and the little table whose heavy drawers contain iodine, cupping-glasses, and blue ointment. At their request, Le Second has designed for them shades "à la ballet russe" for their two lamps. On the shelves they have arranged the vermicelli boxes which they use as lockers. The men of room 26, a centre of artistic life, have made them some additional shelves. An old herring-box plays the part of flower-vase, filled at this moment with silver thistles and a spray of barberry, magnificently red. Ploss can't get over it! His own "büro" is a melancholy place. The old consulting-room, formerly spruce and gay, has become a mere empty loft since he took possession. *Herr Gott Sakrament!* Hang these Frenchmen!

After dinner the medical officers, especially MM. Langlois, Romant, and Bouvat, come to No. 46. We draw back the curtains. We stretch a string across the room to serve as net, and for an hour we give ourselves up to the joys of chamber-tennis, using our hands as rackets. It is for this reason that the new consulting-room has received the imposing name of Salle du Jeu de Paume.

Sometimes, also, it is designated "la chambre des huiles," *das Oelenzimmer*.

Poor Ploss. He cannot get the better of these Frenchmen. He would like to see them yielding, to see them cringe beneath his rod, to see them thoroughly miserable. And yet, whatever he can do, despite their hunger and their fits of the blues, they are cheerful. They sing, they decorate their prison. They are always finding new devices. If they have no tools, they make some. They work unceasingly in wood and stone. All the casemates have tables now, stools, chairs, lockers, water-kegs, draughts, and chessmen. Guiton d'Ancenis and Robert le Bordelais are neither smiths nor carpenters, and yet No. 26 is well furnished. They had no spoons; they "forged" some out of old "bully-beef" tins. They had no forks, but they have cut some from the birches on the slopes. To economize matches, they have made a float-light. To save their fingers from the heat of the boiling soup when it is poured into their bowls, they have fashioned wickerwork saucers. Almost all of them had been compelled to give up their knives; lengths of iron cask-hoop, patiently hammered straight and sharpened, have supplied the lack. Their windows are decorated with tiny pine-trees, planted in herring-boxes. They hope to take them home and grow them in France.

Do what he could, Ploss has not been able to stamp out this creative fervour. He knows it, and it infuriates him. Oh, if he had but been commandant! How he would have hunted down without mercy all those con-

cerned in the underground traffic, in the great commercial enterprises by which our illicit supply of provisions has been gradually centralized. There are two such enterprises, and thanks to the competition between them we have for some weeks been securing, at stable and almost reasonable prices, supplementary rations of inestimable value. With what joy he would compel Marin and Brissard to shut up shop, two men who, with a chance armamentarium, have in kitchen No. 42 established a flourishing foundry of tin rings. And Crussol, who puts the finishing touches to the stones which are prepared for him by a whole squad of drillers and escutcheoners, and who has secured a reputation and customers even among the officers at the Ingolstadt headquarters. How promptly would he be dislodged from his niche in the northern parapet, where he works all day in any weather, squatting and mute like a second Paphnuce.

But, thank goodness, though Ploss can restrict as much as he pleases the meagre governmental rations (and he does not fail to make use of his opportunities in this respect), his jurisdiction does not pass beyond the limits of the storerooms and the kitchens. Throughout the rest of the fort the major reigns supreme, and his regime is so strictly courteous that even the most ill-conditioned among the non-commissioned officers of the guard think twice before ordering any of us strict arrest on bread and water.

Ploss is disheartened. Ploss is wounded. Ploss is sad. Ploss envies Fort A3, a German league from

Fort Orff. Here a mere non-commissioned officer is in command. The fort is in truth little more than a redoubt. Two hundred and fifty Frenchmen of the 6th corps are packed into the place. Their only exercise ground consists of muddy and dark passages, a narrow ditch, and a tiny platform of about a hundred square feet. There is no upper story. In front of the windows, fifty yards away, are the iron gate and the precipitous slope. Eternal twilight reigns within. The governor is like a narrow-minded usher, a jealous and timid despot, trembling before orders from headquarters and terrible to the prisoners. If only Ploss were *Vize-Feldwebel* of Fort A3!

I know this little fort. My friend Cambessédès, house-surgeon from Paris, a doctor serving in M. Langlois' group of stretcher-bearers, has been sent there from Fort 8 as medical officer, accompanied by M. Valois, a prosecutor from Montpellier. In a note, clandestine, of course, he let us know his whereabouts. Kindly, as usual, Baron von Stengel allowed the medical officers and me to pay them a visit. Thus it came to pass that last Sunday, escorted by a *Gefreiter* and a soldier with fixed bayonet, we walked from Orff to Wegstetten. It was thawing. Tiny blue rivulets flowing through the pastures and along the furrows of the ploughs reflected the quiet sky. We met groups returning from vespers: women, children, and old men, peaceful folk who nodded to us as they passed.

When we reach the fort, which is insidiously buried in the interior of a bald eminence and is invisible



a hundred paces away, a parley is necessary. The *Gefreiter* hands the officer of the guard of A3 the permit issued by the commandant of Fort Orff. The sentry opens the gate. We pass in. Lining the walls, the red-trousers form an inquisitive and saluting hedge. Cambessédès runs up quite out of breath. Through long, dark, and narrow passages he conducts us to the medical officers' quarters.

These are screened off by wooden partitions from the remainder of a gloomy casemate. Two beds, two wooden chairs, a table; no vacant space. It suggests a midshipman's cabin on a man-of-war. The air is raw. Illustrations cut from the *Woche* are pinned to the wall. Upon a little shelf above my friend's bed I see his wife's photograph. A whiff of French perfume is wafted to my senses. I think of Paris, home, the fire-side, work, peace! I say little during the visit. We sit down haphazard on the beds, the chairs, the table. A little soldier from Châlons, very quick and lively in his movements, comes in with a jug of coffee and an odd assortment of half-pint mugs. The company talks of the Geneva Convention and of medical and technical matters. Those from Orff get the others to tell of the recent happenings at Fort 8.

I pay scant attention to these petty details, swallowing my coffee mechanically amid the clash of voices and laughter. All my thoughts are in Paris. How strange seems this society of Frenchmen in the remote Bavarian redoubt. It is borne in on me of a sudden that madness rules the world.

Cambessédès and Valois, as hosts, now show us round. A crowd of soldiers follows us. Some of the adjutants post us concerning the life of the prisoners. Poor fellows, they have no von Stengel! In A3 it is impossible to procure any kind of supplement to the official rations. It is impossible to get a jug of good beer from time to time to keep up one's spirits.

From the platform there is a fine view over the village of Wegstetten and the wood-crowned hills. M. Langlois, at least, thinks so. He looks with all his eyes. He is in ecstasy—when the sentry, a stumpy Swabian in a black greatcoat which is threadbare, weatherworn, and turning rusty-green, pounces upon him, charges bayonet, and touches the major's tunic with the point of the steel. Our surgeon-in-chief protests: he has made no attempt to climb up the turf-covered breastwork; he has not trespassed into a forbidden region; he has merely been admiring the view. "Quite so," barks the obstinate little bulldog, snorting angrily; "to look outside is forbidden."

Unquestionably A3 is very different from Fort Orff! Whatever you do, baron-gaoler, do not ask for leave until we are set at liberty. Do not hand us over to a Ploss!

But even Ploss has his good hours. French lightness of heart is able from time to time to exert its charm over this hard Franconian noddle. His surly air passes off. With a brisk gesture he pushes his greasy *Mütze* back over the nape of his neck. His brown tuft of hair makes its appearance, giving him an engaging

and almost sportive air. During these calms, Davit, the Hercules cook, can with impunity seize the quartermaster, wrestle with him, and make as if to throw him head-first into a boiling cauldron. The paunchy cook of No. 42, when the herrings are being distributed, can then, under Ploss' very eyes, sneak a good-sized "Bismarck" and stuff it into the pocket of his smock, with the tail sticking out. But beware! The quartermaster's ordinary temper will suddenly return, and the prisoner with whom he has just been laughing will find himself sentenced to three days' cells simply for having kept up the game for a second after the eclipse. Ploss is then capable of making allegations likely to bring a man before a firing squad. He will say, for example, "Prisoner X attempted to kill me by striking me on the head with a ladle."

What a wonderful thing is this French light-heartedness! Heavy-witted northerners term it levity when they should speak of it as vitality. These little Frenchmen! To-day you see them sad at heart. The weather is grey; a languorous humidity prevails which seems to reduce the scale of the landscape and to make the noises draw nearer. We hear the roar of the trains in the plain, trains moving westwards, towards France. Those afoot walk as in a dream; many never leave their palliasses. The men from Provence are thinking of the sunshine; the Parisians recall the joyous meetings of Saturday evening when work is done; the Bretons listen in imagination to the heavy, rhythmical

sound of the great surges breaking at the foot of the native cliff. Every one has "the hump."

Suddenly comes the sound of singing from the corridors. "They are singing! Have the letters come?" One and all rush to be first at the main gate, close to the *Kommandantur*, beneath the gloomy arch. There is coming and going and much talk. "Is it true that there are lots of letters?"—"Two or three hundred, so d'Arnoult says!"—"What luck! When shall we get them?"—"Oh, the sorting will take some time." The procession to the kitchens is animated. The hope of being about to receive a letter has eased the nervous tension.

But what, among eleven hundred men, is the handful of letters reaching the fort from time to time? For one who is made happy, there are thirty disappointed. My friend Foch, the awe-inspiring sergeant of the "vitriers" [infantry chasseurs], the most martial man in the fort, a hero, has not yet received a single line from Colroy-la-Grande, in the Vosges, near the Lubine pass. Since August the French have been fighting on this crest, advancing and retreating alternately. In the frontier villages the skirmishing never ceases. What has become of his brave wife, who, scorning bullets, leading her seven-year-old twins by the hand, used to bring dinner to her husband in the firing-line? Is she dead? Has she been interned? And his house, the little house known so well to the men of the 10th Chasseurs, where they had often received food and drink, is it still standing? Poor Foch! His energetic

countenance, with its flashing eyes, is clouded; his tongue, formerly so glib at a story, is stilled. Nor is he the only one who continues to await the first letter from home. I am among those specially favoured, and of ten letters sent to me, but one comes to hand, taking three and often four weeks on the journey.

Fortunately, money orders and parcels, exempt from the delays of the censorship, arrive regularly. Received as if they had been Father Christmas himself, with transports of delight which well-nigh make us jump for joy like children, these are the great dissipators of depression. They have completely modified our life, bringing into the fort a sort of plenty. Jerseys, woollen helmets, Russian caps, comforters, thick hand-knitted socks; every one is now wadded against the cold. Muffled in wool, men toboggan merrily down the slopes. Sometimes we have little dinner-parties. On the rickety tables knocked together by our amateur carpenters there are cups of tea and chocolate, pieces of gingerbread, sponge-cakes, jams, long twists of French tobacco. These love-feasts are not very grand, but to us they are delightful. We nibble our piece of cake, we sip from our steaming mug, noiselessly, slowly, our hearts filled with tender thoughts. We think of the hands which have made the tart, of the eyes which have watched the seething of this jam. If one of the guests should make a joke, he is wasting his wit. The laugh dies on our lips. Every one is full of memories. Our picnics are communions.

After the horror of the first two months of imprison-

ment, when many of us knew no other feeling than that of hunger—hunger by day and by night, the hunger that keeps a man awake and gnaws like an ulcer—now that winter has come we are having a fairly agreeable time. Our bodies have become accustomed to the regimen. The monotony of life is broken by happy events, by the arrival of parcels, money orders, and letters. The work we have had to do at Ingolstadt, Hepperg, and Wegstetten has widened the bounds of our prison. Every one has made a circle of friends. Some of the casemates, with their tables for bridge or poker, have now the aspect of clubs. We have learned how to circumvent German discipline. Our service for the supply of smuggled victuals works smoothly, so that we are at least able to provide ourselves with chocolate and tobacco. Some have purchased books; numerous French works belonging to the Fayard, Nelson, and Flammarion libraries have made their way through the gates, across the ditches, and over the walls; they pass from hand to hand until they fall to pieces. Some of the prisoners are learning German. My big dictionary is, as it were, an ever open mill, where all can make themselves at home. Every room has its writers of topical songs. Stretched on their palliasses, paper and pencil in hand, they cudgel their brains for rhymes. I cannot say that the outcome is sublime, but the verses, caustic without ill-nature, peppered with puns, and stuffed with allusions to the point of unintelligibility, amuse us all. The following stanzas dealing with the “ministerial council,” written by

Cormarie and sung by Saint-Lanne of Agen at the Saturday concerts in No. 7, go to the air of the *Paimpolaise* :

Nos deux majors veulent extraire  
Du beau riz si blanc et si sain  
Une huile pure limpide et claire  
Qu'ils appel'ront l'huil' de riz-sain

Pour avoir le *Ri*

Où s'adresseront-ils ?

Chambre 17 ou aux cuisines !

Il écrit toute la journée !

A chaque repas, drôl' de combine !

On lui sert des figaro-thés.

Il porte pour la circonstance

L'habit vert d'Académicien ;

Les palmes en sont restées en France

Pour les canards de son quotidien ;

Car je les ai vu

Et même à *fon lupt.*

Je dis : ne crois pas ces canards sauvages

Car ils s'ébattent soir et matin

Avant d'être envoyés aux sages

Dans une mar' d'eau de *Laubin*.

But France is a nation of prose writers ; at the fort there are many more authors of memoirs than of songs. Memoirs abound.<sup>1</sup> Why is it that men who have never before tried to record their experiences in writing should feel impelled to recount the happenings of their campaign, and to describe their feelings of discouragement?

<sup>1</sup> The German authorities subsequently rifled all the notebooks containing "memoirs." It was only by continued stratagems that I was able to save part of my own.

ment during a lengthy imprisonment? Do they do it to relieve tedium? Have they an obscure need of confession? Or do they consider the circumstances of their life in war-time so exceptional as to deserve the honour, in their view an extraordinary one, of written record? In my opinion this last motive predominates. Rightly or wrongly, the "little soldiers of the republic" regard the present conflict in an epic light, and at bottom, notwithstanding their ingrained tendency to grumble, are not a little flattered at being among the heroes of this affair. They know that as long as men exist people will continue to talk about the great war, and that in the schools children will learn the names of the battles in which their fathers have fought and suffered. They want to be able to astonish their little ones, to be able to say: "I was there; I fought in this battle; read my account of the matter and you will see how everything happened, what my leaders did, and when I received my wound." Men, Frenchmen above all, whatever their station, have such a hunger for fame.

Yesterday I came across Maze on the slopes, wearing his great red *chéchia*, which accentuates his stature, already considerable. His shirt was drying in the wind, tied to the lightning-conductor, and flapping like a flag. He was sitting behind the parapet, sheltered from the wind, and was reading. "What may you be reading?"—"My battle."—"Can I look at it?"—"Here you are."

In his note-book, worn and dog's-eared, the following



account was pencilled on the pages he showed me. I reproduce it verbatim, with its mistakes in spelling :

It was on August 19th that our company set out from the village of Couture. We crossed the fields to rejoin the Metz road. After we had marched two kilometres along this road, we took shelter in a wood in order to avoid being seen by a German areoplane. After a short halt here, we started off once more towards Fresne-en-Saulnois. We left this village on our left to march upon Auron and Vivier. We found trenches made by the enemy and some dead horses. In the evening we were before Duron and Vivier, the Germans having left these two villages a couple of hours earlier. We, the company "146," occupied all the exits from the villages. At about half past eight in the evening the company shoulders knapsacks and we go to the outposts before Frémery. We passed a fairly quiet night, a few shots were fired towards midnight, and we thought there was a night attack, but it was only a skirmish between patrols. Next day, August 20th, at three in the morning the captain commands us to extend in skirmishing order, for we had been warned that the enemy is in front of us. In two or three leaps we reach the crest of a little hill in front of us. At this moment we receive a few bullets which oblige us to assume the offensive. The lieutenant orders us to fire at five hundred yards upon the enemy advancing towards the crest. At this moment our comrade Arnold, the cook, comes from the village of Frémery, the bombardment of which has just begun, he held in his hands two pales of coffee which he brings to his section, although the captain told him to go back. But, he listening only to the commands of his own courage and coolness, succeeds in joining his section which was then engaged with the enemy. On reaching the line he began to distribute the coffee, but hardly had he begun when he was hit near the left eye not seriously, which stopped him for a moment. But this did not hinder him from continuing his round, stopping from time to time to fire his rifle. It was when he had nearly reached the end of the line of skirmishers that he was hit on the right rist. At this moment he was close to the sergeant-major, who was lying at full length in a furrow and who with

the aid of his soup spoon was digging a hole for his head ; at this moment we had no orders, for most of the non-coms and privates had been killed or wounded.—The sub-lieutenant gives the order to retire to those who are able, but the sergeant-major stopped where he was saying to a man who was near him and who was wounded. “ No slackers here ” giving him a blow with the flat of his sword.—At this moment, the Germans make their charge and come close up to us, the sergeant-major lifted his arms into the air, crying, “ quarter ! my wife my child.”—A little while after we were under the guard of some German soldiers, who conducted us as best they could to the hospital at Lucy. On the way the sergeant-major said to us that but for his spoon he would perhaps be a dead man ?

I was touched by this little story. Maze thinks only of praising Arnold's heroism. He says not a word about his own wound, although this was severe. He was struck in the neck, and the bullet is still beneath the shoulder-blade. One day he stripped in my presence and I felt the projectile. At the same time I had a good view of the sun, the stars, and the nymphs wherewith his chest is decorated, framing the great portrait of Carpentier which Maze had had tattooed while in Paris.

Speaking generally, the memoirs I have read have lacked interest. The hero speaks of the beer he has drunk, of the naps he has been able to snatch between the attacks, gives the names of his sergeant, of his comrades. We get absolutely no idea of the battle he was in. I reproduce, however, the story of Marius-Eugène G——, who was made prisoner on August 27th at Moyon-Moutier. It is the best I have discovered in the fort :

## ACCOUNT OF WAR AND IMPRISONMENT

by

*Marius-Eugène G——**Moyen-Moutier, August 27, 1914.*

Am alone, have lost my regiment, my company, am at Moyen-Moutier. Endeavour to join up with the 52nd or the 75th, can't do it, stop and think, the firing begins again. The Germans are bombarding the town. What on earth shall I do? I lose my head, I am alone, I have no friend, no one to advise me. I run like a madman; I stop when I hear the whistling of the German projectiles I stretch myself at full length on the ground they fall two hundred yards from me and then come nearer. At length I give myself up for lost, I loose my head more and more however I think much of Rive-de-Gier of my dear employers of my dear love also of my brother and sister-in-law and of my dear little niece in fact of every one dear to me and it is with sorrow that I see the shells raning round me I ast myself if I shall ever see again this dear family, this idol which I carry in my heart. Having received a slight wound in the arm I went to the red cross and I have made the acquaintance of a dear friend of the 75th where we always remain brothers in misfortune since the hour when we were made prisoner, Thursday August 27 1914 at five o'clock in the evening; from there they sent us to sleep in a school, without a straw, still get through the night somehow and early next morning they make a list of the prisoners and send us to Saale which is on the frontier twenty kilometres from Moyen-Moutier, on the way the German soldiers make a long stop and gives us a bit of food a meal which I and my compatriots much enjoyed for we were getting very hungry at length we reach Saale it is about five in the evening, they make us sleep hard just like last night only instead of a school it is a church which has been transformed into a dormitory no great catch, the night is rather cold but we get through it somehow. Saturday August 29 we entrain at Saale station at nine o'clock in the morning without knowing where we are going it was a day of anguish for me and also for

all my friends in the same situation as myself, we remain all day in the train all night and all Sunday August 30 when we arrive at our destination Ingolstadt at eight o'clock in the evening, they tells us that there is still 2 hours march to reach Fort Orff where I am still in prison after 4 weeks.

September 24. The weather to-day is rather grey and cold we stay in the rooms, tell what has hapened to us during the campane and the poor fellows serving with the colours when the war broke out said that this was the day of their discharge however we did all that we could to enliven the dull life we have had since our imprisonment.

Being quite without money to provide for my little wants, I am sorry to say that I have had to sell the ring that belonged to my dear mother the one she gave me the year before she died I was forced to sell it to buy food for they do not give us enough to eat and it is with regret that I sacrificed it in order to avoid coming to a bad end, all this is due to this cursed war from which I have been suffering for 2 months now, I hope it will soon be over and that I shall be able to resume the life of peace and happiness I led in the barracks where I had a happy time during the week and on Sunday was happy to be able to get leave to go to Rive-de-Gier where I passed such a pleasant day with my dear employers and my dear girl and that dear family of which I often think, at every moment of the day my thoughts turn to them.

Now at length the day is finished and the moment has come to go and fetch the wretched pittance which they give us as food then to have some talk with my friend, companion in misfortune, bedfellow for we sleep together on one heap of straw and with one blanket, all this because of this cursed war, still never mind the suffering, it is for France.

September 25. Glorious weather, one can feel the warmth of the sun, I take advantage of it to get up quickly, to have a wash, then I go to fetch the trickle of hot water they give us for coffee, I profit by the opening of this fine autumn day to take a turn or two about the fort to take my thoughts off and to proffit by this fine sunshine which has been very rare since my imprisonment in Bavaria.

Then, I do like many of the comrades my fellow-prisoners, try to do some work upon Bavarian stone, to make a souvenir of the fort, but I have no patience and chuck the thing away, for it does not take my thoughts off?

Good biz! a friend in the room has a pack of cards and we begin to play game after game of manilla, this turns our thoughts a bit but its not as good as the old games we used to play in the taverns of the old Couzonnais quarter. In spite of all I think of everyone I left behind me in that old town, of my dear employers, of their old parents who was so good to me and also of the dear parents of my dear girl who is never out of my thoughts and who I hope she thinks much of me.

Thursday, October 1st. Having been one day without writing I hasten to quickly write these two words, these moments are so sweet for me besides to write one is obliged to be alone and that is why to-day finding myself at the top of the fort where I look over all the plane and at the end of it the fine town of Ingolstadt I see many factory chimnies which are smoking also the fields where some Bavarian peasants is working in this place one would never think, seeing the sight which is spread beneath my eyes, one would never think that canon are thundering a few(?) kilometres away. All that I have written on this page makes me feel sick at heart for outside this cursed fort there would be liberty and peace for always. For such a life as we have been living, everyone of us here, is not to be envied. After a war like that we are going through, just as much for the german people as for the French, there is ruin for the 2 countries where are killed or wounded numerous fathers of families who leaves a wife without support with one or more children! I have not yet the rite to be mourned like these fathers of families, but in spite of everything I think much of my life in the future when I hope to be able to make the girl I love happy and whom I hope will not desert me even though she gets no news of me. Here then is the month of October begining very sadly I live in hope that the end will be a little better.

There, it is not very grand, but it is so sincere, and

in any case this work of the pen makes the time pass less heavily. Poetizing, music, memoirs, tobogganing, little dinners, German, cards, whittling, stone-carving—some of the prisoners find the days too short. What an odd creature is man !

Tesson came to see me just now, bringing his last piece of work, a great slab of stone depicting the entrance to Fort Orff. The whole kitchen staff formed up in circle round the masterpiece. "Well I'm blowned !" said Devèse. "That's not been done with the point of a pickaxe," remarked Deschênes by way of praise. I also expressed my admiration. Then the master drew from his pocket a book with clasps, cut in limestone. He had carved on it the title: *Les Mémoires de Victor Tesson, prisonnier de guerre, à sa méchante Louise Huber. —Dolomieu, Isère.* While I was praising the dedication, he showed me his tools, saying: "Here are my cold chisel and my piercer. I made them out of my bicycle pliers. Here's my ruler; I 'forged' it out of the tyre of a wheelbarrow."—"Is that all?"—"That's all. I have no dividers; I measure with a straw."

Unquestionably the Frenchman is a very live animal. When I hear my fellow-prisoners applauding the artistes of No. 7, Lannessan, Grignon, Saint-Lanne, Bouquet, or the "artistes socialistes" of No. 38, the members of the audience splitting their sides with laughter at the satirical allusions and joining lustily in the choruses; when I go to No. 13 to visit Le Second, who receives me with the affected airs of a dandy as he ushers me into his domain of five feet square, incredibly elegant

and quaint, fitted up à la Martine ; when I contemplate the roguish gaiety of all these "Gavroches," their indefatigable activity, the effervescence of their wit—I think of a Swiss friend of mine who is always saying, "These devils of Frenchmen!" I can even understand the stupefaction of that great barrel of a Max! One will never get the better of these fellows. One will never bend such bodies beneath the yoke of servitude. Without violence, by the simple play of their natural life, they would tame the most mulish of masters. The substance of which they are composed, ever radiating energy, is irreducible. It is evident that, by special privilege, they are born "free men." Sovereign people!

How right is Péguy when he says that their watchword is "Hope." Misfortune befalls them ; they seem overwhelmed. From disorganization they pass to grumbling and from grumbling to revolution. Come back to look at them to-morrow ; you will find them valiant, dashing, light-hearted heroes recking no longer of yesterday. They laugh at their sufferings. They sing. They defy their gollywogs of gaolers. They combine to think out some new plan. They engage in some fresh piece of work. Merely to look at them renews the savour of life.

At first everything went amiss here. Apart from eating our starvation rations, we had nothing to do. It was a terrible time. But contemplate them now ; they are blithe enough. They are prisoners, and yet you would say they were in their own homes, masters,

owners. Prisoners? They seem to be the guardians of their sentries; they go so far as to chide the sentries if these are slovenly in the performance of their duties. It is not that the prisoners have adapted themselves to the environment, but that they have forced the environment, willy nilly, to adapt itself to them. Like certain mosses which grow where there is no humus, they catch flying grains of dust and force these to yield the scanty soil which will enable them to live.

Moreover, events seem to favour this natural propensity to hope.

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The last thing was your card with a picture of the *Victory of Samothrace*. You had erased the title and put a date in its place. Every one came to see this bulletin of victory which I had put up beside your portrait! I wish you could have heard the comments.

"Then we shall not have suffered for nothing," said a lad from Montmédy. "I was two days in the forest with five comrades. We made holes in the trees to suck the sap. We had hallucinations. Two of them killed themselves." Louis Ludes, a baker from Pouzolles, wounded in Morocco, and wounded again at Lunéville, the worst of wounds, a shell in the abdomen (his recovery astonished all the surgeons), exclaimed: "I too, tonnerre, I am in this victory!"

And while they were looking at the beautiful Greek with the mighty wings, Dutrex, who was reading the



*Burgraves*, declaimed to us in his grating bass voice, full of cruel irony, the mendicant's apostrophe :

Les Vandales ont pris Berlin ! Ah ! quel tableau !  
 Les païens à Dantzig ! Les Mogols à Breslau !  
 Tout cela dans l'esprit en même temps me monte  
 Pêle-mêle, au hasard ; mais c'est horrible ! . . . ô honte ! . . .  
 Allemagne, Allemagne, Allemagne. . . . Hélas !<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Vandals have taken Berlin ! Oh, what a spectacle !  
 The pagans are at Danzig ! The Mongols at Breslau !  
 In my mind all this rises simultaneously,  
 Pell-mell, as chance wills ; it is horrible ! . . . O shame ! . . .  
 Germany, Germany, Germany. . . . Alas !

December 8, 1914.

## DAWN

HALF awake, I stretch out my hand to see whether Dutrex is there. His palliasse is deserted, his rug folded up. I raise myself on my elbow. All the others are still asleep, lying like long mute mummies. I draw on my shoes. At the main entrance, the sentries, hands in pockets, heads between their shoulders, are stamping their feet, their eyes white with cold. "*Guten Morgen!*" — "*Guten Morgen!*" I grope my way down the stair and along the passage. The lamps have gone out. There is a light in No. 22. I go in. Dutrex is shaving; his little mirror is perched on the vice. In front of him stands a smoky lamp. All around is darkness. Bouquet passes from one cauldron to another, singing softly and sentimentally :

La petite Française  
Qui m'attend là-bas  
A les yeux de braise  
Le cœur de lilas. . . .<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The little Frenchwoman  
Who awaits me at home  
Has eyes that glow  
And a heart of lilac. . . .

The kitchen is full of sulphurous fumes. "What time is it?"—"Five o'clock." Dutrex has finished shaving. I take his place before the mirror and the lamp with the broken chimney. Some one knocks at the door. A little man comes in. He wears a fatigue-cap; his head is bowed, his face is tied up in a handkerchief, he holds his left cheek with both hands. He looks at us like a whipped dog. "I'm in such pain!"—"What's the matter?" asks Bouquet, who is tender-hearted. The poor fellow is unable to speak plainly. "I have been walking up and down the corridors for a long time. I can't keep still. My wound is gnawing at me. It seems to be screaming there, just under the ear!"—"Poor chap, you must see Laloux, but he is still asleep. Sit down there between the stoves. There's a stool for you. Drink a mug of coffee while you're waiting. That'll warm you."—"Yes, I'm perished with cold."

Instead of a cheek he has a great violet crevasse with lines of scar tissue radiating from it. He was struck by a bullet which passed in obliquely through the nose and on its way out shattered half the left side of the face, including the articulation of the jaw. He has an abscess forming in the internal ear, which is pretty sure to kill him. While I shave, I look at this reservist.

He arrived with the last batch of convalescent wounded. Most of them were but half cured. They were sent away from Ingolstadt to make room for refugees from Pomerania, children, women, and old men, broken down through privation. The Russian

wave is washing these refugees by thousands into the southern hutments.

"Does it still hurt?"

"Not quite so much."

"Where are you from?"

"From a village near Mans."

"Do you think that your missus will be able to love you with that hole in your cheek and your hanging jaw?"

"I hope so."

"Where were you in barracks?"

"At Saint-Mihiel."

"Where did you get your wound?"

"At Marville, near Virton, in Belgium."

"Long ago?"

"August 24th."

"Here's another mug of coffee for you."

The man, Vouvard by name, puts his hand behind the ear, closes his eyes, and rocks to and fro, saying: "I don't know what to do, it hurts so."

The cooks come in. With great hooks they take down the boiling cauldrons. Dutrex goes out for the roll-call. Steam fills the casemate, stifling us, and I open the window. Day is breaking; tiny clouds of a pale silver tint are floating at a great altitude. Deschênes, the woodman from the forest of Argonne, catching sight of the white frost on the slope, says with conviction: "This sort of weather gives one the hump here. Think how jolly it would be to be at work. Think how there are people perishing of hunger while we are shut up

here doing nothing. And when we get home we shall have to work ourselves to death to pay off the debts our wives have made while we have been away. A lot of good one gets out of war!"

Dutrex enters with a martial stride. "I say, Riou, here are the latest orders from headquarters: 'The purveyors and the workmen employed at the fort must be accompanied by a soldier of the guard; the prisoners are forbidden to approach them. The sale of food and drink to prisoners is strictly forbidden. The commandants are responsible for seeing that these orders are carried out.'"

"Very well, the slopes are also forbidden. I will immediately go for a walk there."

I linger on the ramparts. The sun is about to rise. The air is pure, like that of the high mountains. Beyond the huge Danubian plain I catch sight for the first time of the blue serrations of the Tyrolese Alps, crowning the delicate lines of the middle distance. To-day is the feast of the Immaculate Conception. The air is filled with the sound of bells. The deep notes of those of Ingolstadt mingle with the brighter chimes of Hepperg, Wegstetten, and Lenting. The cocks are crowing. The crows are flying at a great height, and the harmonious silence is broken from time to time by their croakings. Everything glistens. The sky is superb. The earth rejoices. The soul finds refreshment and delight in the elysian dawn.

Over there, towards the rising sun, upon the Warthe and in the Carpathian defiles, men are killing one

another. In the opposite quarter, beyond the gentle undulations dotted with white farms and beyond the magnificent barrier of the Swabian Jura, men are killing one another in Alsace, in Lorraine, and in Flanders. The villages of Europe are filled with truncated limbs, wooden legs, broken lives. Poor world of men!

December 13, 1914.

## HE GOES AWAY

HE leaves this evening. Every one is sad. Who will replace him? If only it is not a man belonging to the school of the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*,<sup>1</sup> which has been summoning the government to take reprisals against the French prisoners. "*Geduld genug!*" exclaimed the official journalist; "We have been patient long enough!" He demanded the head of Colonel Grey, Sir Edward Grey's brother, and also that of Delcassé's son, both of whom had been wounded and taken prisoner. The *Ingolstädter Zeitung* has been even more drastic than the Munich journal.

Yesterday passed gloomily. The men of the guard, like all those who have not been at the front, were spiteful and meddlesome. The patrol refused to allow us to set foot upon the slopes, even insisting that we must remain in the mud and puddles of the lower

<sup>1</sup> After repeated requests I had been allowed to subscribe to the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Three other prisoners have subscribed respectively to the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, the *Berliner Tageblatt*, and the *Kölnische Zeitung*.

courts. Brissot and I contended that they did not know the regulations, and that the great track halfway up which dominates the two courts was certainly within bounds. Anyhow, taking advantage of the mist, I had before sunrise walked as usual on the forbidden escarp. Then, having a slight cold, and feeling poorly, I lay down upon a pile of palliasses in the Salle du Jeu de Paume, and spent the day in re-reading *Eugénie Grandet*, which Corporal Henriot had just received from Paris.

But I was thinking more about the baron's departure than about old Grandet. The others were playing chess. "What a fine chap he is!" exclaimed Détry. "Riou, old boy, we ought to make him a grand speech when he leaves. Did you see the farewell note he sent round the casemates? He thanks his 'fellow-workers.' He courteously congratulates every one. He wishes us good luck. There's a man for you, one who has never failed to treat us as men. Nothing of the Ploss about him!"

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Lying with my head beneath the rug, my book closed, and my eyes shut, it suddenly seemed to me that the recent weeks had been almost enjoyable. I forgot the long nights of the first month or so, when my stomach was continually gnawing, and when the memories of meals eaten before the war, their steam, their odour, were so vivid as to constitute a veritable torture of



Tantalus. Forgetting homesickness and tedium, I found myself looking back wistfully to that which in actual experience had appeared horrible.

It seemed to me that with the transfer of von Stengel a fresh imprisonment was about to begin, harassing, with no security, and inhuman; that henceforward I should be truly in prison.

An end, I said to myself, to our evening walks on the roads adjoining the fort. An end to those pleasant saunters in the twilight, a little band of five or six, almost as good as a tête-à-tête after the life of the herd. Our new master, just married, will devote his leisure to his wife. Possibly, moreover, as the baron has suggested, the recent escape of four English officers from Fort Hartmann will make the new commandant very strict. . . .

All at once it was borne in on me that the last few weeks had been at the same time melancholy and pleasing. . . .

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Farewell to my hop-garden, in which I had gleaned dried hops wherewith to spice the insipid German tobacco. Farewell to my bushes of blackthorn and barberry, where I plucked red berries, where I cut such fine switches—*der Stock des Gelehrten*, as Stengel said. Farewell to my farm at Hepperg, my great country seat which has fallen to the female line, whose fortress-like walls, amid the straw stacks and the noisy populace

of ganders, geese, hens, and guinea-fowl, spoke to me of my birthplace grieving for the two sons at the war, spoke to me of the country house haloed in memories, dozing beneath the winter sun in the light shade of the olives and the sad cypresses, blue-girdled by the shining hills of Vivarais. Farewell to the disused quarry, the silent undergrowth, filled with shafts of light and with gossamer; the carpet of dead leaves white with hoarfrost, which crackles beneath the feet. Farewell to my royal Danubian plain, where the setting sun throws into relief the huge and gentle undulations, dotted with smoking villages. Farewell to my evening skies, my grand Bavarian twilights, infinitely variable, which will remain the most splendid memory of my imprisonment.

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I was above all grateful to Baron von Stengel for having asked me to join him in his afternoon walks with the French medical officers. As you know, I have more taste for the beauties of nature than for the doings of my kind. In thus presenting me with the freedom of the fields, my gaoler gave me the thing I like best in the world, barring your company and that of a few intimates.

He extended me this invitation one morning when I was in the throes of despondency. It was late in September. At dawn there had been an iridescent haze. On the escarp, great drops of water had formed on the birch and willow branches, and were

falling thence to the ground. The weather was splendid ; the sun was gradually dispersing the transparent vapours ; and yet one could imagine that all nature was weeping. I was tired out. To secure oblivion, I had been working too assiduously for several days. I was at the end of my resources ; the sordidness of the surroundings sickened me and hunger gnawed at my vitals. I was unutterably miserable. I had no strength to do anything but to yearn for you, to dream of flowers, of fresh springs, space, freedom. France ! France ! Brissot, hoping to cure me, had brought me George Sand's *Maîtres sonneurs*, a greasy volume which had found its way here God knows how, perhaps stolen from the municipal school by a soldier quartered in the fort. Said Brissot : " It is redolent of nature ; I am bringing you the very bouquet of the French countryside ! " Such was my condition when the major came by. " Hallo, monsieur Riou," he exclaimed, " you don't look as cheerful as usual."—" I'm home-sick, mon commandant."—" Would you care to take a walk with me in the country this evening ?"—" Should I care to ! "

My memory of this first excursion is of a joy which was perfect though uneventful. The great black gate with its heraldic lions was opened by the sentry for the egress of the major and his companions ; to the left lay the avenue, the thicket of acacias masking the ditch of retreat ; below us, between the shivering, gold-capped birches, the gentle and unending undulations of the plain ; to the right, seen obliquely, the yellow out-buildings, the tall hop-poles, the military road cut up

by artillery fire, running straight in the direction of the sombre crest of the Franconian Jura, and crossing the huge chessboard of ploughed fields; further on, the little strategic wood, a magnificent growth of fir-trees, larches, and beeches, encircled by stone-pines and oaks, a sort of sacred grove, with an undergrowth of the most varied nature.

I was walking in the rear of our little company, going quietly along, avoiding conversation, filled with delight.

"Are you still sad, M. Riou?" said the baron.

"Oh, no, I am perfectly happy."

The wide sky covering the wide landscape; the delicate lines of the horizon; the purity of the light; the brilliancy of the September tints; the fragrance of the fields; the herds of oxen; the ploughs at work, guided by boys whistling melancholy airs—it was a Virgilian scene. Poor wreckage from the battles of Lorraine that I was, this energy of nature, of peaceful and robust nature, flooded my heart with great waves of mute pleasure far more intense than the intoxication of the senses. After the bloodstained fields of Dieuze, after the fetid prison-house, after qualms, suffocation, base and monotonous wretchedness, it seemed to me that I was coming back to life.

The wood was swarming with mushrooms. My companions, especially Læbre, were mycologists. They scattered among the undergrowth. "Here's a real nest of *tricholoma personatum*," cried Bouvat in sonorous tones. "Come and make sure, Læbre." Læbre saunters up. The young man smiles good-naturedly.

"Pooh! that's not the lilac stem! That's *amenita muscaria*. That's no good to us. But you have overlooked those fine *russulæ* behind you on the roots of the pine-trees." "Herr Læbre, here's a prize!" called out M. Cavaillé, in Languedoc German. "Here are some *lactarii delicosi*; come and look, a regular fairy-ring of them." Their mouths watering, they all crowd round this epicure's fare. "What a feast we shall have this evening!" Now comes Jeandidier, of Longwy in Lorraine, walking up with long, deliberate strides, carrying very carefully, as a man carries a candle in a procession, beneath his fiery beard and his long Bavarian pipe, two great parasol mushrooms, which of all the mushrooms have the longest stems, have the most delicate flavour, and are the most fragile. Bouvat bore away the spoils. Each one made his contribution of *russula cyanoxantha*, *clitocybe*, meadow agaric, and liver fungus. The baron was amused by these schoolboy antics. From time to time a covey of partridges was put up, and flew noisily away; or a hare, awakened with a start, fled in terror. Night was falling. We made our way back, skirting the glacis. I culled a bouquet of autumn leaves. We crossed a field from which the potatoes had just been lifted. A few of the tubers had been overlooked. I put them in my pocket with great care, under the baron's very eyes. Bouquet, the head cook, made a fry of them that evening. Eight of us enjoyed them.

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This morning a deputation of the comrades came to me when I was at work, to commission me to write a farewell address. It had to be very short, since the baron could spare us but a few minutes. In pencil (ink is forbidden) I quickly compose what is needed. I read it to the deputation, which approves the wording. I give a hasty polish to my shoes, and we set out for the *Kommandantur*. The baron shakes hands. We arrange ourselves in a semicircle. I am at the right wing, close to the commandant. His successor is there, a stiff-mannered little man, quite inscrutable. He wears a yager's cap, green in colour, pulled down to the ears; the collar of his tunic stands up so as almost to hide his head, but we can see his drooping features and cold eyes. While I am speaking he stands at attention.

"Mon commandant, to every one of us your departure is a matter of personal regret. You are an enemy, but never has any one had a more courteous enemy.

"You have treated us as soldiers, with perfect frankness; we have treated you as the true gentleman that you are.

"We, the French prisoners at Fort Orff, differ upon many points. But there is one matter upon which, when we return to France, we shall all agree, namely, that Commandant Major Baron von Stengel deserved and gained the affection and admiration of those towards whom for three months he had to fill the position of gaoler.

"Accept our thanks, mon commandant. God have you in his keeping."

With moist eyes, M. von Stengel introduces us to his successor, each one by name, detailing our qualities, our services, the incidents of our career. Stiff as ever, the *Oberleutnant* bows to each in turn, to the infantry of the line, to the chasseurs à pied, to the chasseurs alpins, to the artillery, to the engineers, to the hussars. They are tall, handsome fellows, of the same type as the grand old von Stengel. We can hardly believe that we are in Germany. We are sincerely affected, quite free from self-consciousness. The baron speaks to us as friends. At his age, when the events that one can look forward to are numbered, everything seems of importance. This separation is painful to him. None of us can fail to recognize it ; there is no pretence about his distress. He presses us by the hand. He tells me that he will have our address translated, and that he is going to send on his carriage with the luggage. "I want to take a last walk with my friends," he said. "God guard you, my fine fellows."

The walk, just now, was a melancholy affair. To avoid the mud on the road we strolled along the edge of the fields towards Hepperg, crowding round the baron as round a dear friend who is taking leave for ever. Great bands of red striated the dark sky. Smokelike vapours lowered over the earth. Night came on, gloomy and solemn. The baron spoke to me of Ingolstadt, whose massive steeples could be seen in the distance through the mist rising from the Danube. He told me that apart from Germelsheim in the Palatinate, this was the only fortress in Bavaria ; that

Tilly and Wallenstein had lived there ; that the little town of twenty thousand inhabitants had been a capital in its day. When we reached the gate, he said with a smile, " I count my friends' heads ; all of them are here." We shook hands lingeringly and in silence at the door of the *Kommandantur*.

Farewell now to the fields ; farewell, even, to the footpath of the escarp. I have been warned that I shall be fired on if I am seen there. I must be content henceforward with the muddy track overlooking the poor amphitheatre of the courts, filthier than a pigsty. I still have your little acacias, leafless, lugubrious, shivering in the bitter wind.



December 17, 1914.

## DISAPPOINTMENT

OUR new gaoler has introduced a fresh method of taking the roll-call. We have all to line up in two ranks in the sticky mud of the ditches, and to wait there while we are counted. This ridiculous enumeration interferes with the digestion of our poor midday meal, and serves more than any other petty formality to remind us that we are prisoners. Just now, when the gloomy ceremony was finished, I went to see the *Feldwebel*.

He is a wealthy horse-dealer from Ratisbon, cunning, short, with a receding forehead, fresh-coloured, laughing eyes, well padded with fat, a typical German Jew. Recently emerged from poverty, moderately patriotic, secretly thinking that people are very stupid to get their skins perforated for the *Vaterland* and other fine words, he takes for his own motto in all circumstances that a living dog is better than a dead lion. He has managed to arrange that his part in the campaign shall be a safe one, played where he will be close to his faithful spouse and to his business, far from the deadly bullets. He is quite a good fellow, with no

desire to play the persecutor ; but since his chief dread is to be caught in a dereliction of duty and sent to the front, he is extremely strict. Twice a day, at two and at seven, we exchange language lessons. This does not merely secure me some new words of German, but also from time to time I am given a handful of nuts and two or three apples.

I hasten off to fetch my parcel. I imagine that it contains something to eat—chocolate, sausage—and I am hungry. The *Feldwebel* giggles like a child. He takes the key of No. 72, the terrible casemate which is as damp as a drain ; and, flanked by d'Arnoult and myself, he reaches the "parcels office" at the end of the gloomy passage. I walk confidently, for I have already, by clandestine methods, scrutinized your consignment, and weighed it in my hand. It was compact, as heavy as one could wish, and felt like a ten-pound box of Menier chocolate. I was cocksure. Here we are ; we light the lantern. I lay the packet on the table. Keenly expectant, I cut open the oilcloth wrapping. Books ! Montaigne, Voltaire. An indulgent glance from the *Feldwebel* at this consignment. I take my leave. Brissot awaits me at the turn of the stairs. "Well ?"—"Books, old chap."—"Capital ! The smallest grain of millet would have suited you better !"

Not even a letter, a little smuggled letter ! How punctilious you are ! Do you know that your letter of November 2nd did not come to hand till yesterday, having taken forty-four days to travel from Paris to Fort Orff ?

*February 26, 1915.*

## OH, DEAR !

THE first warm, sunny day. The grey grass of last autumn is showing in patches here and there through the melting snow ; it is slightly tinged with green. The sky is blue. A huge cloud, white and shining, rolls towards the north.

Why do I feel so lightsome this morning ? Is it possible that I am once more what I was before the war ?

If only the end were nearing, the end of the long miseries of winter in the lousy, stinking, and chattering casemate ! If an end were nearing to the sterile cackle, the disquisitions on strategy, the disputes, and the lamentations, to all that a discontented crowd exhales, through the empty hours, in the way of physical boredom and of melancholy ! Oh the gnawing ache of these two months in an ant-hill encompassed by snow, filth, and bitter winds ! Two months of purgatory. I know now that to live among men, nothing but men, day by day and night by night, in intimate contact, without activity, without solitude, without the

company of women (that other solitude), is to live in purgatory.

Take men who have nothing in common but the flag. They differ in traditions, education, and temperament ; their habits of life are fixed. They are in the full vigour of manhood. They are strong and spirited. They are familiar with violence and struggle. Throw these soldiers pell-mell into a cellar, where they hunger and are cut off from news. Subject them to meddlesome regulations. Compel them, in this wretchedness, to live always in close proximity, and far from everything which they have hitherto known as life. Doubtless they will have their good hours. At times, when their minds are filled with thoughts of those they love and of their motherland, their words and their silences will be no less pure and sweet than is a long summer twilight. Or when some newspaper, concealed in a parcel from France, has brought them tidings of victory and wafted to them all the hope of their free brothers, they will experience a sublime unison of joy. But at other times. . . . No, I wish to forget. After all, the heroes of the great epic are but men. Why should we expect of them, during months and months, a patience and a self-command of which many men in good society, men esteemed well-bred, are incapable when a caller stays too long?

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Everything has changed since Baron von Stengel's departure. The new commandant, M. Schwappach,

of the department of streams and forests, possesses all the virtues of the German bureaucrat. He is active, precise, orderly, meticulous. He has also the infatuation of his caste, for he believes that the world gravitates round it. He admires and fears his chiefs, and he applies to the very letter every *Befehl* from headquarters. Everything is now forbidden. Daily the *Feldwebel* reads the orders to the sentries: the slopes are forbidden; without challenge, they must fire upon any one who is seen there.

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I have suffered greatly at being thus cut off from the view to be obtained from the ramparts, and this has affected me hardly less than the short commons. The number of sentries has been tripled. We are forbidden to wear civilian clothing unless it has been dyed red. Headquarters has even compelled the chasseurs alpins and the colonial infantrymen to paint red stripes on their uniforms under the pretext that these were too much like civilian clothing. It has become impossible to get the most trifling supplement to the official rations. M. Schwappach had a *Landwehrmann* court-martialled because he had sold some chocolate to the prisoners. The guard is terrorized. The loaf which used to last three days must now last five, so that our daily allowance of bread is  $7\frac{1}{2}$  oz. This would mean sheer starvation if we received nothing from France. No more coffee, no

more roasted barley: roasted acorns merely. Those who get more parcels than the others have a regular train of dependents—famished men. My own dependents are chiefly soldiers from the invaded regions.

Having written a strongly worded letter which was sent back to me from Ingolstadt (I am in extremely bad odour at headquarters), I am threatened, should the offence be repeated, with being completely deprived of the right to receive or send letters. I have already been punished with three weeks of this measure.

I have had some very remarkable discussions with the commandant. These people want us to love them. They demand, filled with indignation, our reasons for not loving them. If we give them our reasons in plain terms, and support our assertions with facts and dates, lo! ten days' prison, on bread and water!

M. von Stengel, where are you? Anyhow, we now know what German discipline is. We know it in all its purity and all its splendour. There is no longer any one to temper its severities.

April 20, 1915.

## THE RUSSIANS

THE Russians whom we were dreading have arrived. For the last three months the Germans have been threatening us with them as with the plague, adding : "In the camps where the French and the Russians are together they always come to blows."

One morning the *Oberstabsarzt* inoculated us against cholera. Every one said : "They are coming!" The *Feldwebel* did in fact go through the casemates, allotting five to one, ten to another, and fifteen to some. In the afternoon, groups were watching from the outer part of the slope which commands the road from Ingolstadt. There was much grumbling. Some were cursing the Germans for wishing to poison us with the deadly Asiatic disease. Some, frightened by the inoculation, were already imagining themselves black and rotten.

At six in the evening, an hour earlier than usual, the electric bell rang for the evacuation of the courts. Immediately afterwards, the forty-nine heads of rooms were summoned, were drawn up in line beyond the bridge, and were told to wait.

The gentle April twilight had already enveloped the brow of the slopes, and the lower red-brick front looking into the ditch lay hidden in the gathering darkness as if in ambuscade. French prisoners were bunched round the windows. With laughing faces they defied the commandant, stiff and dapper, doing sentry-go on the glacis. Under his very nose they began to hum the Russian national anthem. But the Russians did not come. The great black gate, buttressed between the mossy walls of the counterscarp, starred with anemone and colt's-foot, remained obstinately shut. Impatience grew. At length the outer sentry whistled, the *Hauptmann* went forward, and the gate opened.

The distribution of the convoy was effected in the Prussian manner. Each headman went to take delivery of his Russians outside, behind the gate, and conducted the supplementary squad to his casemate. This took half an hour. In Indian file, following their French corporal or sergeant, they went along at a quick step, but noiselessly in their supple jack-boots; they were muffled in huge grey overcoats, and their size was increased by enormous fur caps. Night fell. The dead colour of their uniforms melted away in the darkness. The silence was absolute. Pale Scythian faces, flat-nosed Tartar faces, Asiatic types with wide cheek-bones, Samoyede beards, downy and curled—all the Russias were passing. We looked on. When they had crossed the bridge the fort swallowed them.

In the interior, to the scandal of our masters, French



rule prevailed. Notwithstanding the order confining us to our rooms, the "Frantsuz" crowded to the thresholds to greet the "little fathers"—"Good-day, Russkis!" they cried, regardless of the Boches; "*Germania kaput!* The Carpathians floup!" They made roguish gestures indicating freedom.

"What monkeys!" thought the Germans, as they looked on. The truth is that no one understands so well as the French how to invent a language, to supplement words by signs and onomatopœias. They have an excellent excuse for neglecting the study of foreign languages! Does a good mime learn foreign tongues?

The Russians got on little faster in the corridors of Fort Orff than in the attack upon Lowicz, where their advance was obstructed by barbed wire. Each door was an ambush; every Frenchman an obstacle. Cigars and cakes rained upon them. And then the handshakings and the amicable clappings on the shoulder. Détry, though he is as much afraid of lice as of cholera, exchanged his képi for an imposing Siberian head-dress made of sheepskin, bristling, stinking, and alive!

The little fathers had had nothing to eat since the previous day. The quartermaster served them out a morsel of cheese, but no bread. "*Germania, niet hleb*" ("There is no bread in Germany!"), said the Russians. "*Ja, nichts Brot!*" rejoined the French in their bad German; "but France *Brot*, plenty *Brot!*" Thus communicating with their friends in nigger talk, they emptied their haversacks before the hungry men.

The Germans laughed on the wrong side of their mouths. They had expected war; what they saw was love. Until nine o'clock the turmoil was incredible. Each room was treating its new recruits. The poorer rooms offered crusts of white bread baked in Saintonge or Lower Brittany. In the well-to-do quarters the men brewed chocolate and served it with rusks. Since in my room, that of the interpreters, there were no Russians, I went to No. 16, the case-mate of Corporal Dumoulin, my comrade-at-arms. Dinner was finished. Seated on their palliasses doubled over, our allies were digesting the good things sent by French mothers. Near the window, a hairdresser was already dealing with the great mops of hair.

"You see," said Dumoulin, "I want to smarten them up. But how pious and ceremonious they are. Of course we divided our food with them. They all kissed my hand. Then they took off their caps, said their prayers, and fed. After that, they got up, said their prayers again, and kissed my hand once more. But what have you got there?"

"I have no Russians, so I shall adopt yours. But unfortunately they have already dined!"

"Don't bother about that; they will dine ten times over this evening!"

It was my turn to be embraced. Gingerbread, Easter eggs, jam, petit-beurre biscuits, dates, cigarettes—I was kissed between each course. One of the Russians, a hairy corporal, a thick-set man, with dog-like eyes, was not satisfied with my hand, but kissed me

on the lips. I suppose it is the custom of the country. Some of them overwhelmed me with profound genuflexions as if I had been the white elephant.

Throughout the evening there was an intoxication of generosity. Thrifty men at ordinary times, the French now gave all they had. Il Poverello could not have done better. The huge round loaves kneaded in the family kneading-trough and baked in the village oven, the apples and nuts of the last harvest, old sausages spiced with garlic and thyme, everything, even the "surprises" secretly prepared by the maman for her boy in captivity—everything was handed over. Little Stéphanus of Saint-Denis, who has lost his hearing through a wound in the head, and who, being an orphan, would receive nothing from France were it not for you and Mme. Weiss, had only his fifth of a loaf of potato bread. He gave it. The comrades from the invaded regions, who have to live on the provisions of their "adopted brothers," were greatly distressed that they had nothing to share out but their poverty.

But if charity was lively, gaiety was insane. The little fathers were stupefied with astonishment. They looked upon us as legendary *bariny* (seigneurs), as Crœsuses flowing with milk and honey, as magicians proof against misfortune, able to make the desert, and even the prison pavement, blossom like the rose. What a change for them! They had been the serfs of the Boche sergeants in the Lechfeld camp, their backs were still smarting from the canings administered to revenge the loss of Przemyśl, and from this they were sud-

denly transported to become guests at the feast of the parable! Rich and poor, beggars and lords, all were equal, all were friends, all were brothers at this primitive Christian agape, which lacked nothing, not even good cigars. Such plenty and such brotherhood turned their heads. Bewildered and mute, ignorant of our language as we were ignorant of theirs, and having no other means of showing us their gratitude, they kissed us in season and out, and they prostrated themselves before us as before their own icons.

I have spoken to you about Graby, one of the two famous comic cyclists known in Paris, and indeed throughout Europe, under the name of the Brothers Abbins. His wound is healed. He is as lithe as ever, gay, martial, a jolly fellow. "*Ein lustiger Gesell*," the *Feldwebel* calls him, adding, "There's a typical Frenchman for you!" In Dumoulin's room I am being melted almost to tears under the Russian kisses, when Graby bursts open the door, and, quite out of breath, exclaims: "Riou, old chap, my Slav poilus are making ready to dance. I invite you to the party." He drags me off. His casemate is at the other end of the fort. On the way he explains that he has discovered a sort of interpreter, a Pole who has been in New York, and who knows a few words of English. "You'll see, we're going to have high jinks to-night!"

There are indeed high jinks. An assemblage of képis and fur caps beneath a huge candelabra, improvised by the hosts, and ornamented with aeroplanes

and flags cut out of paper. A horrible menagerie odour fills the room. The banquet is over. Tea is being handed round in old tins. Graby, looking even more like a street arab than usual, is doing the honours, assisted by big Ménard, erect, smart, as clean shaven as a British guardsman, and with the suspicion of an English accent. Prompted by Abbins, the Pole introduces me as a French writer familiar with Russian authors.

"Friends!"

"Friends!"

"Comrades!"

"*Sayousniki!*"

"Bravo!"

"Hurrah!"

"Now," says Graby, sketching a figure, "let us dance."

A circle is formed. Two youths as lean as cats confront one another. At first they make a feint of sparring. They seem as if engaged in a slow and weary pyrrhic dance. The onlookers' eyes sparkle; an indefinite measure is beaten with the hands. This lasts for two minutes. Then the rhythm becomes brisker, the partners draw themselves up to their full height and keep their arms closely pressed to their sides; they are motionless like fakirs. But with their heels they make a noise which sounds like that of distant castanets, a muted crackling in an ever-accelerating tempo. A sudden pause. The dancers squat on their hams. There follows the famous step

which we have beheld at the Russian ballet, the strange dance whose savage rhythm is punctuated by the clacking of boots on the boards. At the very end, the Russians give an abrupt "Hurrah!" It is over. Graby congratulates his men by patting their cheeks, by commendatory gurgles, by the "boo, boo, boo," and other labial interjections that mothers use to their nurslings.

More tea, more cigarettes. We ask for the Russian national anthem. You know it. It seems to me as heavy as a convict's fetters. To relieve my ears I demand the *Marseillaise*. Boude sings the couplets and we take up the chorus. The swing of it, the decision, the thrill, as of a victorious charge, astonish the Russians. My neighbour the Pole weeps.

"You are crying?" I say to him in English.

"You can't understand," he makes answer. "That air represents liberty. You possess it; you don't know the value of it. We dream of it." His debased English was interspersed with Polish phrases which rang with a sort of Latin sweetness. "Don't you know that we are slaves?"

"This war will free you."

"You think so? We have fought well enough! My comrades stood firm when they were being mown down before Lowicz. Yes, we have fought fiercely for the Czar, even while feeling that his victory would serve only to make our chains heavier. Poor Poland! Poor Poland!"

The name of Poland attracts the attention of a

big artilleryman with a bull neck, a flat nose, a hard and suspicious expression.

"What are you saying about Poland?" he asks me in German.

"That this war will liberate the country. You have the Czar's promise."

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His fixed look, fierce and defiant, his turned-up chin, his tanned and robust visage, contrast with the noble passion of his words. Never before have I witnessed real despair, that despair which hardens the features and vulcanizes the soul, despair transformed into a motive for living.

This Pole is as tragic as one of Wyspianski's heroes.

Around us the others are enjoying themselves like brothers reunited. Graby is begging Ménard to sing the American *Row! Row! Row!* I long to take my companion out on to the slopes, and there, amid the silence, to let him talk at length, to listen, and to make him feel that I share his dreams, that France is the friend of every nation that yearns for freedom.

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The Pole makes no accusations against France. She has deceived his people, but he loves her just the

same. He believes in her, despite her faults, as the great champion of justice.

Ménard is singing. The French and the Russians are taking up in chorus the refrain, "Row! Row! Row!" Elbows on knees, head in hands, expression disdainful, my Pole says no more, but sits like a colossus, making the best of his impotence.

The Russians have suddenly started a new air. A tenor sings the first phrase in solo. A bass joins in. Then the other voices take up their parts. It is beautiful, with a rough, serious, wild beauty. I ask the title. *The Song of the War against Japan*. Then they give some love songs. It seems to me that all voice the same music, a powerful and melancholy, and yet simple music, with the sweet notes of infinite submission. I think of a grand Gregorian chant encompassing all the pleasures and all the wrongs of earth in an atmosphere of the eternal. The strains have a bourdon of lamentation, like that of a woman spent with suffering asking sympathy and consolation.

Next day the Bavarians of the guard could hardly believe their eyes. In the courts, in the ditches, everywhere, among basins and heaps of underclothing, quite a tribe of naked little fathers were glistening in the sunshine. How thin they were! To what skeletons they had been reduced by two months in Germany. Smiling, making awkward little gestures, each one of them allowed himself to be manipulated by a Frenchman, who soaped him all over, rubbed him



down, pummelled him, dried him, and finally dressed him as a French infantryman. "Now, then, we must wash your duds. Come along." And the French mamma led his great little Slav to the well, helped him to pump some water, arranged him a bench. Then both set to work and scrubbed.

In the evening, when the roll was called, the *Hauptmann* exclaimed: "But where on earth are the Russians?"

"There they are," answered Junot, sergeant-major of No. 46.

"But what is the meaning of this masquerade?"

"Mon commandant, their clothes are drying on the slopes, and you see they could not attend muster in a loin cloth."

These first days were pleasant. It was good to make friends. To share without thought of the morrow, to live without calculation, to act solely as the heart dictated—it was like paradise. Yes, paradise within prison walls. We were brothers. Even the veterans of Manchuria and the Afghanistan campaigns, with all their tinsmith's shop of commemorative medals and their grizzled heads, even the sergeants with three stripes, had become our little brothers. "You are hungry? Here is some white bread from France; here is some home-made jam; here are some apples from my orchard. Eat, Russki." Or it would be: "You old zebra, what are you doing that for, digging the lice out of the seams of your clothes with a knife? You're sowing them all over the place. That

kind of grain sprouts. Look, this is the way. Tic! Tic! Take your thumbs to it and press the beast between the two nails. Kill, kill! It's inhumane? Never mind. Kill away. Have no compunction." So the Russian "zebra" sets to work to crush his live-stock. They now divest themselves of lice quite after the French manner, and no longer swarm with vermin as when they arrived. But they can still while away their long hours of leisure in parasitological investigations and in slaughter.

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Every evening the French and the Russians walk arm in arm on the slopes. In less than no time a conventional language has sprung into being. It does not lead very far. No matter. When the mimic vocabulary is exhausted, the friends walk side by side in silence. But if a Bavarian sentry passes, the conversation is resumed, the same things being emphatically repeated; they clap one another on the back, they exchange head-gear, képi for toque, fatigue-cap for its Russian equivalent. After a few days the Russian buttons stamped with the two-headed eagle had found their way on to our coats, while the French grenade buttons were displayed upon the huge Russian earth-coloured cloaks. Tartar feet were encased in French army shoes; while red trousers were tucked into the supple boots of Ukraine leather. Early Christian communism prevailed. Every one dressed

as he fancied, mixing the uniform of the two armies. For an entire week the height of the fashion in Nos. 44 and 46, aristocratic regions, was to walk out in moujiks' blouses. Le Second, Poiret's pupil, had work after his own heart. Little Mitka's blouse, a brilliant grey-green, embroidered in black at the collar and wristbands, was his great triumph.

Gradually the little fathers came to understand that they must not kiss our hands, and that genuflexions were by no means to our taste. It must be admitted that they found this repugnance somewhat troublesome, the repugnance of men who make a cult of equality. They love direct demonstrations. They are nearer to the days of the Iliad than to '89, fond of physical endearments like children and the early Greeks, and a trifle fawning. But so winsomely! Besides, they had to show us their gratitude. If instead of the forbidden gestures they made us an oration, we raised our hands to heaven, saying: "*Nye ponimayu*—I don't understand!" What were they to do? Yesterday one of them, in despair, threw himself upon the ground, kissing my footsteps in a transport of delight. Impatiently I seized him, and dragged him to his feet rather roughly. You should have seen him, awkward, speechless, and motionless. His silence seemed to say: "Why do you forbid me to embrace you, to kiss the dust beneath your feet? Do you not care for my gratitude? And yet you are kindly. Or do you prefer our simple 'thanks,' our *spasiba*, to which your French jokers invariably

respond by a long word which I can't understand, saying, 'Non, pas si bas ! Plus haut !' Do you really think that a word has any *body* in it if it be unaccompanied by action ?"

It was thus that they reasoned within themselves, timid and embarrassed, when we repelled their embraces. Then, struck with a sudden idea, they took the brooms from our hands, they seized the shoes that we were polishing, they ran to fetch water for us. In order to give body to their *spasiba*, they did all our work for us. Soon it was impossible for the Frenchmen to find any occupation for their hands. In the dark corridor leading to the great well, where the prisoners have to wait in a long queue for their turn, shouldering pitchers stamped with blue lozenges, one now saw none but Russians ; in the kitchens, when the potatoes were being peeled, none but Russians ; in the corner of the courts where the laundrymen install buckets and tables, none but Russians. We had to take severe measures, and to insist that France should take a hand in all the hard work.

But, amid this fine zeal, the Moslem Tartars take their ease on their palliasses, quiet and blissful. Let others perform all the arduous tasks. Christians and Jews can scour the cement floors of the casemates, shake the rugs, fold up the bedding, carry the *Kartoffelbrot*<sup>1</sup> from the tumbrel to the storeroom. Impassive, crushing you by the glassy immobility of their introspective gaze, indolent as mandarins (whom they resemble in their

<sup>1</sup> Potato bread.

yellow tint, their wide cheek-bones, and their fine, shining moustaches), it seems as if the Prophet had furnished them with an opiate against all the accidents of life. Nothing moves them. They ask for nothing. They never share anything. They never pray. Do them a service ; give them something from your own narrow resources ; they take it all as a matter of course. Some of them have two or three wives. Without a sign of tenderness, they show you the portraits of these wives, fraternizing in a single photograph. Plenty, scarcity ; cold, heat ; a concourse, solitude ; war, exile —everything is alike to them. Life breaks impotently against the bovine torpor of their fatalism.

But when the Christian Russians say their morning prayer, standing bare-headed, multiplying triple signs of the cross, kissing the Testament, and abasing themselves before the little painted icon in a glass case fixed to the wall above their palliasse, it sometimes happens that their inhuman eyes blaze. They utter a raucous cry : "Your Lord Jesus Christ, he's no good !" Thereupon the devotees break off their Paternosters, and attack the scoffers with foot or with fist in order to avenge the insult to their deity.

In casemate 34 there are ten Frenchmen, twelve Russians, and one Jew. Thin, sickly, with a stoop, a sallow complexion, a timid and plaintive expression, this Jew is the most unobtrusive of men. He seems afraid of taking up too much room. When spoken to he is abashed and stammers. He never asks for anything. He is always content. If you merely smile at

him, he looks at you humbly, with a dumb, gentle gratitude.

As he knows some German, I have been able to talk to him. He is a good little soul, peaceful and in-offensive, rather dull-witted. He contemplates the knout and the pogroms without indignation, accepting them as a farmer accepts hail. The only pleasure he knows is the negative one of being left unnoticed, of being forgotten, but this pleasure he welcomes as a wonderful act of grace. In a word, he is one of the humble of heart to whom the Rabbi rejected of the rabbis has promised the kingdom of heaven.

One day, when I was bringing him an orange, his compatriots leapt upon me from their palliasses, surrounding me and restraining me by force from approaching the Jew, pointing him out with a gesture of disgust, as if to preserve me from a horrible contagion.

"Jew! Jew!" they cried with flashing eyes.

They were all speaking at once, so that I was bewildered by their volubility and their passionate gesticulations. Desiring to clear up the difficulty, I sought an interpreter, and as soon as we returned, the cries were redoubled.

"What are they all saying?" I demanded of Issajoff, the interpreter. "Why are they holding me back like this?"

Issajoff smiled. "Here is something," he said, "which wins me over to France! You're astonished that these Russians prevent you giving help to a Jew, that they insist on assuring you that he is a Jew. To

them it seems self-evident that as soon as you know him to be a Jew you will no longer wish to give him anything, but will treat him as a leper, a pariah, a damned soul!"

The Russians continued to scream, to look murderously at the Jew, to shake their fists at him. As for him, with his customary air of dull indifference, he remained quietly in his own corner behind the door, beside the dustbin and the spittoon, the dirtiest and dampest corner of the casemate.

Said Issajoff: "They say to him, 'You have crucified our Lord Jesus Christ'—'I have defiled your mother'—this is the grossest insult in our language. They also say to him, 'You love the Germans; if you could, you would have shot us.' They also say: 'If you accept the Frenchman's present, we will flay you alive!'"

Issajoff is a revolutionist—and a Jew, although he keeps this last fact to himself. Coldly and deliberately he reported to me his comrades' words. But the vague smile which played over his large features indicated irony and contempt.

"You really find this scene surprising?" he resumed.

I contemplated these disciples of the Christ, all yapping at this poor wretch. For the first time in my life I found my Christianity a heavy burden.

I went up to Kajedan. I pressed him by the hand and gave him the orange. I wanted to give him the contents of my cigarette case, but he said he did not

smoke. "Well, give them to your friends." He did so. The Russians greedily seized the *papirosy*. They threw themselves on their palliasses, and, forgetting to avenge their God any longer, they gave themselves up to the delights of tobacco.



July 1, 1915.

## VASSILI

I AM Vassili's *barin* (seigneur). He polishes my shoes ; every morning, in the court, he brings me water for my "teube" ; he picks up balls for me in our extemporized game of tennis ; if I am thirsty, he runs to the well ; if the cloth of my worn trousers, too skimpy for me (the government has never been able to supply me with trousers suited to my figure), gives way during an unusually vigorous movement of Swedish gymnastics, he promptly threads a needle and repairs the damage ; he watches over me as one watches milk on the boil ; no valet has ever served me so well. But what constrains him ?

Were I to forbid him to serve me, he would shed bitter tears. Have I ever given him an order ? Have I ever been short with him ? Is Vassili my valet or my friend ? He no longer kisses my hands, he no longer kisses my lips, he no longer kisses the ground where I have trod. He has given up these moujik ways. He simply shakes hands with me. When I am at work, he sits on my ration-chest or

stands at the window, smoking *papirosy* (cigarettes), and looking at the illustrations in my books. When he likes them he exclaims "*Harosho, harosho!*" (good, good). But always I feel his faithful Siberian eye upon me. He divines the least of my wishes. Do I need a book? He knows perfectly to whom it has been lent. He jumps up, runs along the corridors, finds the man, maybe in his casemate, maybe beneath the shade of a poplar, maybe in one of the ditches, explains himself in nigger talk, and, breathless and perspiring, comes back to me with the prize. It can hardly be said that we converse; the difficulties are too great. We look at one another, and we smile. He gives me everything he can; I respond in kind. He works; I work. He serves me; I serve him. I know how to read and write; I can influence the *Feldwebel*; and I can ask my relatives and friends in France to send me things. For his part, he knows how to darn, patch, fetch water, wash up. Thus, side by side, each at his own task, we both work. He imagines that I am a *barin*, in which he is mistaken, and that I love him, in which he is not mistaken. For my part, I regard him as a good fellow from Tomsk, who pines for his *izba* (cottage) and his wife, and I would like to send him back to them in good condition when his imprisonment is over.

*July 7, 1915.*

## THE COMMON PEOPLE OF GERMANY AND THE WAR

IT has lasted for eleven months. How much longer will it continue?

Our sentries are even more impatient than we are ourselves. They grumble and faultfind. "It is too bad!" they exclaim. "Do you think it will be over in a month?" they ask us. "Pooh!" we answer; "in a year perhaps, or maybe two, when we have conquered the autocracy which tyrannizes over you!" They stare at us blankly, utterly disheartened.

These poor fellows are suffering. They have many children, six, seven, or eight. Their savings are exhausted, and the wolf is at the door. When we are marching to work, they recount their troubles to Brissot and to me, confidently and deferentially, as they would to an elder brother. They are good by nature, simple-minded, somewhat subservient, weighted by innumerable centuries of silent submission. One perceives so clearly that they have not effected their revolution, and that despite parliamentary suffrage and the Reichstag they are still under the dominion of the feudal age.

. Through studying them closely, and through talking with them, it seems to me that I am beginning to understand this huge and mysterious Germany. I knew something of the *élite* of the country, but was quite ignorant of the common people, workmen, peasants, and lower middle class. But these are the backbone of Germany.

How different is their world from ours ! In France we read the paper ; we have political ideas ; we influence the appointment of ministers ; we take sides passionately, for or against Pelletan, for or against Clemenceau, for or against Poincaré ; every one of our village orators has good advice to give to our admirals, our generals, and our diplomats. How unlike Germany ! Nothing can equal the ignorance of these folk in public matters. Think of a French agriculturist of the days of Louis XIV, hardworking and kindly, engrossed in domestic cares, knowing that it is hard to gain a livelihood and occupied in this pursuit by day and by night ; accepting princes, seigneurs, taxes, *corvées*, and wars as one accepts sunshine, rain, hail, and frost, without venturing to pass any judgment upon them ; saying that these things have been, are, and will be, that he himself is but a poor man, that every one has his own trade, that it is the king's to govern and his to provide a living for his family ; there you have the political essence of the German peasant and the German workman. Monarchy, republic, foreign relations, double alliance or triple alliance—don't waste your time talking to him about these. Should you do so, he will listen,

he will express a civil assent, and will fall asleep over his beer.

A Frenchman cannot understand how utterly indifferent are the common people in Germany to political ideas and to questions of state. A Frenchman, whether he knows it or not, and even if he believes himself to be a monarchist, reasons like a leader. He speaks as if he were himself a part of the king, and a considerable part. He eagerly discusses the affairs of the country. Militarist or anti-militarist, he is patriotic to the core—patriotic like the sovereign he is. Should the foreigner insult France, he is personally insulted ; this is his own business ; the offence is not offered to some distant prince ; it touches himself, the individual king ; it makes his own skin tingle. This was obvious at the mobilization ; it remains obvious after a year of war. It is not simply a caste which detests the Kaiser and his satellites and wishes to subdue them ; these feelings animate every Frenchman, be he minister or cobbler. For France, one and indivisible, is truly *a free nation*, a collection of autonomous individuals who have determined to live together, who know themselves to have been entrusted with the most exalted of human missions, and each one of whom makes the fulfilment of that mission a point of personal honour.

How different is Germany ! The country possesses an élite of persons well equipped for administration and rule, and this endows her national life with a fine aspect of cohesion. But directly we examine more closely, doubts arise ; we see that the cohesion is no

more than apparent ; there are those who theorize about Germany as a whole, but there is not *one* Germany ; between the people and the leaders there is no intimate solidarity, no communion of love, hope, and will. Above, there is an empyrean of men who believe themselves superhuman, who utter claims, trace plans, issue orders (*Befehle*), who, as if at section drill, thunder out commands to Germany and to the world at large ; below, there is a swarm of good and peaceable folk, all engaged in their insignificant private affairs, and making no attempt to interfere in the loftier mysteries.

Doubtless, in the lower regions, respect is felt for the empyrean ; people tremble before it, as before the eye of God ; but there is no risk that they will attempt to penetrate its designs. They are faithful subjects, and they obey. They are soldiers when the time comes for enrolment, and good soldiers ; when the order for mobilization is issued, they go to the war ; when the ritual demands it, they shout hurrahs "for king and country." But at bottom, if words have any meaning, they are not patriots. Militarists, yes ; easily regimented, yes ; patriots, no.

It is true that they would be greatly astonished if any one were to say to them point-blank : " You don't care a fig for your country ! " They all believe themselves to be good, honest, and loyal Germans. Are they not obedient to the death ? Certainly they are. But they would be equally obedient, with very little feeling of disturbance at the change, to George V or to Poincaré ; and they would obey just as well in a

republic as in a monarchy. It is not their business to be patriots (for this presupposes a degree of liberty, and of internal sovereignty, to which they have not yet attained), but to be good subjects. To obey, unfailingly and without discussion ; to abase themselves devoutly before authority ; to be subservient to their leader, whoever he may be ; to carry out orders whencesoever derived, be they democratic or be they Cæsarian—this it is to be a good German. Active as he is in private affairs, he is passive in religion, with a sort of mystical fervour, and he is passive in his relationships to authority. The Germans hardly realize this, and yet to us it is so obvious.

Here is an example. On one occasion I, a prisoner of war, roundly reprimanded a sentry, reproaching him with disobedience to orders. Secretly I was laughing, but the sentry trembled. Standing at attention as if confronted by an officer, he trembled before the majesty of the command, the *Befehl*. I had issued an order, and that is why he stood to attention ; there he was, submissive, stupefied with willingness ; he forgot that I was a Frenchman, subject to his orders, that the regulations forbade me to speak to him, that he should have charged bayonet and touched me with the steel, even run me through. No, I had issued an order ; the man who commands, who gives a *Befehl*, is sacrosanct for the German.

The reason is that the German has never emerged from private life. He lives in his house, on his land, in his factory, his tavern, his church ; he lives with his

family, with a few friends, with his professional associates. He makes his life there as agreeable as possible; he is an able domestic economist, knowing well how to adorn his residence, his table, his savings bank. The currents of modern life, socialism, liberalism, materialism, the religion of comfort and of hygiene, have developed his practical aptitudes to an unimaginable extent, to a degree unsuspected in France. But no current of modern life has induced him to touch the holy of holies, the government; to discuss the constitution, the bureaucracy, or the army; to investigate the essential problems of political life. Even the boldest among them does not lose his veneration for constituted authority. In fine, there is but one domain in which he is free, that of economic life. Here, therefore, his energy is concentrated, and within this sphere his thoughts are confined. Here he is master; here none can equal him in perseverance and tenacity; here he risks everything and makes trial of everything; unceasingly he innovates; he is hindered by no prejudice: the poverty of recent days spurs him on and makes wealth seem marvellously appetizing; in a decade he transforms a province; in three decades he makes of Germany a fragment of America in the heart of Europe. We are forced to recognize that Germany is the "Marius's mule" of the economic world.

But this suffices him. Formerly he possessed the clouds, but he has bartered the inheritance for the markets of the world. He boasted of being Greek,



but he is now content to be Carthaginian. He makes money, and he knows nothing more.

And authority? Does he not know authority? Yes, he knows it, but as something grand and remote, as a sort of divinity which might do him harm, and which he must render favourable or at least indifferent. He knows it as an average Christian knows the invisible. He believes in it, but continues to mind his own business; he is not jealous of it and has no desire to share its exercise; he gives it his confidence, and pays it a certain worship of an unexacting character; above all, he asks that authority should help him to make money; in that case he finds everything good—the Kaiser, the bureaucracy, the army.

This utilitarian loyalty is especially characteristic of the wealthy German. As far as those of small means are concerned, they recognize that outside private life, beyond the family, the factory, the tavern, and the trade-union, there exists something that is great, divine, and unknowable. In the highest degree of the unknowable, in close proximity to God, the saints, and the hero Siegfried, there exists authority: emperor, princes, generals, diplomatists, ministers. All this is an immense and unfathomable ocean, primitive and sacred; but he, poor mollusc, rooted to his rock, is concerned solely with the tiny region upon which his valves open. And when the terrible convulsion of the powers of the abyss, of the sceptred, gold-laced, and helmeted majesties, rages athwart him, shaking his frail habitation, he trembles, simultaneously inspired with dread and with

love, and he murmurs his abjection and his devotion in inarticulate words. When all is over, forgetting the gods that have passed, the gods that glitter, shout at him, and sometimes kick and chastise him, he conscientiously resumes the task of loving his wife, of procreating as many children and of earning as many marks as possible.

After all, the German of no account is utilitarian in his loyalty. He does not, like the wealthy German, demand that his government shall deliver the universe into his hands, so that he may inundate it with wares great and small "made in Germany." He is less exacting. He asks merely for work and a livelihood. But upon this his desire is firmly fixed. He has become accustomed to a certain degree of comfort—quite recently, it is true, but the newest pleasure is ever the most attractive. He wants to get his belly well-lined during the week, and to be able on Sundays to go with his *gnädige Frau* and his quiverful of children, all smartly dressed, to drain several dozen tankards of beer, and to spend the entire afternoon, laughing boisterously, in the arbours of neighbouring *Wirtschaften*. He likes to think proudly that his father lived in poverty, but that he lives at ease. He likes to imagine that no workman in the world is happier than the German workman. As long as he has a full stomach, he can believe that all is well. The government can do what it likes, can ally itself to Austria or to France, can be licentious or strait-laced, can obey or disobey the Reichstag. He himself, trusty Michael, is well off. Germany, therefore, is great, the world is perfect.

I have gradually been able to fathom this state of mind through more or less clandestine conversations with the soldiers who guard us and the peasants who employ us at twenty pfennig for the day of nine hours. Notwithstanding all the patriotic songs with which the recruits make the roads resound, and notwithstanding all the pratings of the pulpit and the school, I am now confident that the affairs of the fatherland are not Michael's affairs. Whether it be that the degree of economic emancipation he has attained supplements or reinforces his ingrained instinct of submission to authority, in any case, the ancient sentiment, quasi-religious in nature, and the new sentiment, thoroughly utilitarian, lead to the same result, a concern with nothing but private affairs, political indifference, so that one can even say that in the world of politics the common German is a mere cipher.

This state of mind has its advantages. It is favourable to the maintenance of public order. Since everyone rests content in his own sphere, there is no friction, there is no waste of energy, no mutual suspicion between the classes. Authority, certain of its durability, can take long views, it has elbow-room. Whilst those in authority are loved, they can give themselves up to their natural bent, which is to regulate—to regulate the workman at home, the employer abroad; to wrap themselves in purple, to cut a dash, to astonish the universe. All these things are done for their own sake, for the pleasure they give, but they serve also to shed a reflected glory on German commerce. This political

nullity of the crowd has hitherto had good results. But hitherto the crowd has consisted of fat kine. Association with the worthy Michael day after day in these times when every one is rationed, when poverty and death stalk abroad, has led me to think that the political nullity of the people, precious to those in authority, is hardly likely to produce a tenacious and trustworthy patriotism, and that in the long run it may well eventuate in disaster.

For nearly a year I have been studying life in this corner of Germany. I observe, I ask questions, and I listen. They are now quite tamed. No longer do they cry death on us. No longer do they call out *kaput*, except as a joke. In the villages, when the working gang arrives, the children flock to the scene from all directions, bare-footed, somewhat timid, at once shy and smiling. They have heard their fathers say that the French are splendid soldiers, "the only ones who can hold their ground against the grey-blues." The description has raised us in these youngsters' esteem. They know, too, that we receive parcels, many parcels. They believe us to be extraordinarily wealthy. The gossips even state with definite assurance that there are six millionaires and one multi-millionaire at Fort Orff; and, for what reason I know not, I am the multi-millionaire. This little world is astonished that persons of such eminence, terrible on the battlefield, should be so friendly with their humble selves. The German bourgeois and the junkers, we gather, have less agreeable

manners. Finally, the villagers have been informed that our prison society is a true republic, that we have suppressed all distinctions of fortune, that the "sans-parcels" gain just as much advantage from the coming of the French mail as the "little-parcels" and the "big-parcels." This communism, natural as it seems to us, touches and vanquishes them.

The fact is that the children and the members of the working gang fraternize. Some of the poor women secretly offer us an apple or an egg. The old men salute us humbly. One of us was addressed as "Most honoured sir," another as "Highly well-born sir." Even those who have been discharged from service on account of severe wounds, men with empty sleeves and horribly scarred faces, no longer glare at us with the murderous hatred they showed at the outset.

At Ingolstadt, when we are waiting for our parcels in the square in front of the *Kommandantur*, civilians come and go before our group and converse with us. The women are particularly attentive. They recognize monsieur Pierre, "who had a frightful wound, and who, God be thanked, is now quite well again"; monsieur Paul, "who . . ."; monsieur Jacques, "who . . ." They smile broadly when we call them to order, quoting to them the phrases in which one of the newspapers the night before has censured them for their friendliness to the prisoners. Little do they care what the papers say. The sentry growls at them, but they tell him to his face that the *Franzosen* are pre-eminently "cholis" and "chantils." Some of the better educated go so far as to

admit that "a red-trousers is worth quite as much as a *Feldgrau*," and that "it is all nonsense to say, as people do, that France is decadent."

Yesterday, some of the gang were talking to a hoary-headed postman.

"Well, daddy, how goes it?" said Bracke, who can speak the Franconian patois.

"Very well, gentlemen, very well!" There he stood, not knowing what to say. He had taken off his *Mütze* and was wiping his forehead to keep himself in countenance. Then, all at once:

"It grieves me," stammering slightly, "to think that we are at war with you . . ."

"Nou, nou, old chap, we're not at war with you! Our quarrel is with the big guns of your country. They're a bad lot; they oppress you, and would like to oppress the whole world. But you're a *poteau*! (*Du bist ein poteau*)."

"*Poteau*, what's that?"

"A comrade, a chum."

The postman had tears in his eyes. "Ah," he exclaimed, "it does me good to hear you say that. I love the French. You are so awfully nice to every one. You don't despise the common people."

"Here, old general, here's a cheroot which my missus has sent me. Happily France keeps us supplied, as you know. All the same, we intend to give a good hiding to your old Kaiser and all your bigwigs. We are republican. Liberty, equality, and fraternity. Live and let live is our motto. But any one who

meddles with us had better look out. Damn it all! why don't you kick your dirty old Kaiser into the sewer? Never mind! We shall set you free, and be jolly quick about it."

The postman, dumbfounded, lit his cigar at the wrong end.

Yes, they have changed greatly since our coming. The dogma of French decadence, with which they had been sedulously indoctrinated, no longer finds credence. They join with us in making fun of it. It is amusing to see these humble folk, who have always been treated with disdain by their superiors, whether civil or military, accept us as intimate friends. They feel flattered when they can talk to us on a footing of democratic equality, for they do not fail to recognize our superiority, and they are greatly touched that we never abuse it. They feel that we are sincere in our hatred of the pride of caste. They applaud our republican speeches. In return, they confide to us their grievances and their despair. The poor devils are absolutely unanimous in detesting this horrible butchery.

It is unquestionable that the terrible burden of the war—the most terrible burden of death, weariness, and misery, that has ever weighed humanity down—presses more heavily upon their shoulders than upon ours. We have been held up in the trenches since September. On their side, for a year they have had no respite. Alternately victors and vanquished, upon the eastern front there continually occurs some new

gigantic action, like that of the Marne. Day after day there is a savage attack in full force. Day after day there is a massacre. More than three and a half million Germans are fattening the soil of Galicia and Poland; more than ten millions have been wounded. And why? In defence? "Ah," they say to us, "if you only knew how little we care whether we are French or Prussian! Give us peace, give us peace!"

They no longer believe that the war is a war of defence. They have heard their non-commissioned officers, men of the middle class, cursing Austria for having led them into this hateful business. The idea has become current in the villages where the troops are quartered. Exasperated by their sufferings, the soldiers are murmuring. Many would like to desert. They understand perfectly that they are the victims of a caste of nobles and manufacturers mad with pride. They still obey, but they grumble. A German grumbler is a new phenomenon.

"Every one hates us," declared in my hearing a young workman from Upper Franconia. "Every one in the world except the Pope and the Turks. There can be no doubt that our rulers wanted everything for themselves. They told us, too, that the French nation was crumbling and would fall to pieces at a touch. What rot! We know well enough that you are splendid soldiers."

"I was in the Vosges," said a sentry of the 13th Bavarians. "Your chasseurs alpins are perfect fiends!"



"I was on the Yser," commented another. "I shan't forget your colonial infantrymen in a hurry!"

He made me come near the lamp to see his wound.

"Old man," I rejoined, "my younger brother, a colonial infantryman, was also wounded in the fight on the Yser."

"We have been made fools of," they declare without exception. "You are not decadent! Far from it! Nor are your cannon. Fine tales they fed us up with! If our leaders had been the humanitarians they claim to be, it is obvious that we should have a few friends somewhere in the world. We should not have every one against us. And we poor devils have to pay for the folly. It's altogether too bad! Oh that peace may come quickly! Take Alsace-Lorraine if you like. What on earth does it matter? Take anything. What difference does it make to us whether we are governed from Paris or from Berlin?"

A fat *Unteroffizier* spoke as follows:

"I honestly prefer the French to the Prussians. The French are good fellows. They feel compassion; they share their bread with us. But the Prussians! It's kicks we get from them. A pack of swelled-heads who imagine they can do anything they like, who want everything for themselves, who bamboozle their own people and refuse to give them any rights! There is but one thing we want: to live at peace with the world. Instead of that they make us go and kill. Why? Does any one know why? What do we gain by it? The villages are full of widows

and disabled men. It is even worse in the towns, where lots of working-class families are positively starving. You fellows are lucky. France is rich. France can send parcels to her prisoners. All that we can do is to draw our belts tighter. They lead us to the slaughter while they leave our wives and children to suffer. And how it drags. Peace! Let's have done with it! Peace at any price!"

For the last six months I have not heard a single German soldier use any other language than this. Wounded returning to the front, men of the *Landwehr* or the *Landsturm* on their way to the fighting-line, they are unanimous. If but the tenth part of their private grumblings were to be translated into action there would be revolution throughout the country.

To speak frankly, these mutterings do not evoke my admiration. They are not the fruit of an indignant conscience, they do not manifest the reaction of inner freedoms which have been outraged and deceived, and which come to their own again in the form of a reasserted dignity. One hears in them nothing but the cry of the beaten and overloaded mule. He wants his peaceful stable, bran, fresh water, warm and comfortable litter. But there is no occasion to be alarmed, for he dreads the whip, and his master is an adept in drubbing him all the way up the hill.

For Michael can hardly be said to have become more spiritual-minded since the empire was founded. In former days he was extremely poor. He was frugal. He was fond of music and of dreaming, and

was addicted to a mystical piety. A serf before men, he felt free in the presence of God, his God of the gospels, 'gentle and 'affectionate, *mein lieber Gott*. To-day he is fairly well-to-do. He is still a serf, more of a serf than ever, in relation to those in authority, the nobility, officers in the army, and employers ; but he no longer endeavours to find freedom at God's hands. His new cult is that of a cosy fireside, with good victuals and a barrel of beer. In a word, he has become an egoist. He now thinks only of himself, of his personal interests, of his trade unions which protect his wages, of his co-operative societies which secure his comforts. Without realizing it, through ignoring politics, through taking no interest in the workings of authority, through thinking solely of his own private affairs, he has slipped into the acceptance of that base doctrine which finds expression in the ancient formula, *Ubi bene, ibi patria*—"My country is the place where I am well off!"

Last July, when he was luxuriating in his petty good fortune, he cried with his masters, "*Deutschland über alles !*" At his drinking parties he vociferated jingo songs. Some of the megalomania of the Olympians was fermenting in his body, indiscriminately mingled with beer and sausages. In this mood he saw himself mounting in company with his Germania, mounting continuously to attain the topmost summit of glory and strength. Then he loved his Germania. She was so powerful. It was thus that she had always been depicted to him, as a robust and formidable matron,

not altogether amiable, imposing her will with peremptory fists, but providing her children with such good things to eat and drink, with all the comforts they could desire. How can one help loving a person like this when one is a poor devil who has only just emerged from poverty?

Now the war has begun. Germania is at length to become queen of the world. Forward! Good Michael sets out for Paris. It will soon be over. A fortnight or so. A simple wedding journey. Just think of it: Rheims, and champagne in floods; Paris, the little women, all the delights of Babylon. For, after all, France, as every one knows, is ours for the taking. Forward!

Forward! But, confound it all, there are some hard knocks! Paris is just over there, but what an inferno of fire to get through first! I say, we're retreating now! We're leaving a lot of good Germans on the stubbles and in the ponds of the Marne. What a massacre! They have been fooling us, it seems. The French can beat us after all: in fact, they have already given us a good licking.

"But there's no end to it. How bitter winter seems in the trenches. Always more dead, and more, and more. My feet are freezing. I am badly fed. Oh, my slippers, my nice, comfortable slippers, my darling wife who used to light my long pipe for me, and who used to cuddle me warm in bed! *Sakrament!* What's this horrible war about? They told me it would be such an easy matter. After all, what do I, good, honest

Michael, care about ruling the world? Must I pay for *this* with *my* skin? No, no; I'm only a poor man. What business is it of mine, this ruling of the world? Oh, *lieber Gott*, let the war end soon, let me get back to my village, my pub, my bed, and my children!"

Thus has Michael reasoned, and thus he continues to reason. It is not heroic. Sancho Panza would shake him by the hand as a true comrade. Still, why should Michael be a Don Quixote? Has Germany ever claimed to be a Dulcinea? Has she manifested herself to him as charming, winsome, gentle, and maternal, as loving him unselfishly for his own sake? Nothing of the sort! On the contrary, Germany has terrorized him with rough orders, and has made him efface himself by her display of aggressive force. She has appealed to the traditional servility of his imagination, not to the nobility of his heart. She has desired obedience, not affection.

Now the great hour has arrived, the gloomy hour of sacrifice. It is not enough to sing:

Lieb Vaterland, magst ruhig sein. . . .

No, one simply has to die so that the country one loves may live.

Love is an easy word to say. We have so often been told that the Germans loved Germany, that they were the true patriots, while we, the French, were nothing but anarchists. Yet, after a year of war, these Gallic "grumblers," who are always wrangling, who take ideas into their heads, and who hold to these ideas so firmly

that you sometimes hear them cry, "Perish countries, so long as principle lives and humanity becomes established"—these ungovernable and intractable "anarchists" remain a single body and soul, exhibit infinite patience, and continue the most formidable warlike efforts. Why? Are they inconsistent? Not for a moment. For them, France is justice; France is the human ideal. They save their souls by saving France. They can die, for they would not wish to go on living if beautiful Europe were to fall beneath the German yoke.

But why should you expect these little Michaels of Germany to die cheerfully? Why, as the slaughter increases, should they stand shoulder to shoulder round their leaders, firmly resolved to conquer or to perish? Is Germany really worth dying for?

This much is certain, that the mystical admirers of justice and liberty, who, in time of peace, filled the men of order with dismay, are to-day the most disciplined in the world; whilst the pillars of order, the singers of unity, the adorers of powerful Germania, those who made a mystical cult of force and force alone, have taken to grumbling, are reasoning like ill-conditioned individualists, have denied their faith.

I have noticed a thousand times that these Teuton soldiers who, through dread of their leaders, are not yet traitors in fact, are nevertheless traitors in soul.

This no longer surprises me. I understand why they regard us without hatred, why they long for peace at any price, and why, if the war is to continue, they look

forward to being made prisoners. They suffer too much, and their suffering has overwhelmed their patriotism.

Those only who love greatly can accept great suffering. Their boasted affection for Germania was nothing more than a fever of the imagination, a fictitious suggestion, a sentiment for display. It was the fascination felt by the ignorant for everything that glitters and makes a brave noise. They loved Germania in her success. They loved her triumphant, colossal, brobdingnagian. They loved her as a parvenu loves wealth and a gourmand good cheer. They loved her carnally, a power of the flesh. Has any one ever seen such a love accept sacrifice cheerfully and outlast misfortune? No, the ideal alone is worth more than life. The ideal alone evokes that wonderful love which increases with suffering, the chaste and shy love which shuns display, and which does not chant its pæans or unfurl the beauties of its splendid wings until the hour of absolute surrender. Now Germany has long ere this ceased to be an ideal.

This is what it means to have nothing but force to depend upon. When we lose it, we have lost all. This is what it means to build upon egoism and the political nullity of the masses. When the hour strikes for an appeal to their heroism, we encounter nothing but a soft and melancholy passivity.

But what an astounding organization it is which is capable of neutralizing so much inadequacy of will, and is able to make tough and efficient armies out of this assemblage of worthless material!

*July 31, 1915.*

## CROSSING SWITZERLAND

OUR convoy crossed Switzerland last night. I should have been sorry to be ill, ill with relief and happiness, for this would have made it impossible to describe our reception. It delighted and I must say it surprised me.

I know Switzerland well. I love it like a second motherland. I am familiar with its history and its institutions. I have made prolonged stays by the shores of Lake Geneva, and dear friendships convinced me long ere this that our two nations are animated by the same instinct, the instinct of independence and humanity. In the terrible duel now in progress I was assured beforehand of the freely given sympathy of our predecessors in the art of republican government.

I believed, nevertheless, that on our way through the country we should find this sympathy, however true and however certain, veiled and restrained.

From prudential considerations, first of all. Switzerland is such 'a paradox! When a citizen of Lausanne manifests his love for French civilization (in which he has just as strong and legitimate an interest as any



citizen of Orleans or Nancy), can he ever do so without being afraid lest he may be wounding a fellow-Confederate of Basle or Zurich? Supposing that his manifestation should become generalized, and that it should provoke a counter-manifestation, has he not good reason to dread the consequences to Switzerland of this spontaneous plebiscite? Would it not involve the ruin of this nation with two hearts, if within its frontiers war should suddenly be declared between the two rival civilizations? If during our nocturnal journey from Constance to Geneva we had encountered nothing but gentle and calm faces, I should not, on that account, have harboured any suspicions of my dear Switzerland.

I should have said to my companions :

“Continue to trust her ; she loves us. This democracy is tranquil, healthy, little inclined to use lofty phrases, and by no means fond of scenes in the street ; but she has a robust faith in the right of nations. With all her heart she detests aggressive imperialism and the cultured barbarism of Germany. You will find her shy, reserved, and circumspect ; you will perhaps blame her for her silence. But this would be wrong, for her silence is a duty she owes to her patriotism. She is intensely patriotic. She would like to hail you with acclamations, but a great national obligation seals her lips. You could not possibly wish her light-heartedly to do anything owing to which German civilization and Latin civilization might suddenly come into hostile conflict within her closed borders, for she exists solely in virtue of their mutual accord, and it is her historic mission to

maintain the contact between them, to harmonize them, to interpenetrate each with the other. This abominable war is a difficult hour in her inner life. Even in times of peace she has to walk circumspectly ; but now, if she is to avoid a disruption which is always possible, she must control her every movement, must bridle her tongue, swallow her burning words, the words of love and admiration which, if she followed the dictates of her heart, she would utter to her valiant sister and neighbour. Believe me, my friends, the mountain democracy is praying in her heart for the victory of right, for our victory. Her silence is but a mask ; she is mute for reasons of state."

I did not have to deliver this address. From one end to the other of Switzerland, the Helvetian people, so hostile to demonstrations, hailed us with acclamations. They sat up all night. They overwhelmed us with gifts. The seats of the train were heaped with ribbons, cockades, flowers, boxes of cigars, baskets of food, bottles of the celebrated vintages of Neuchâtel, La Côte, Lavaux, and Yverne. In my compartment alone we filled six haversacks with cigars, which we sent to the front to the 30th of the line, the regiment of poor Robequain, of whose death I learned on reaching Bellegarde.

Do not imagine that this explosion of generosity was inspired by mere pity for the wreckage of war. I am absolutely confident that it was inspired by love for France. Burghers and peasants, children and old men, in German Switzerland just as much as in French, they

all sang the *Marseillaise*. They waved the tricolor. They cried, "*Vive la France!*" At the stops they talked to us frankly, like brothers. They handed us addresses which were hymns to "The Nation of Valmy and of the Marne," to "The Champions of the Rights of Man," to "The Citizen Army which has sworn to conquer or die for the Advent of a Free Europe."

It seemed to me that the proud Helvetians of Morgarten and Sempach, these forefathers of democracy and liberty, had emerged from their national Grütli to line the road in our honour, and to give their blessing to the sons of the young republic.

I cannot describe the mad jubilation which surged through our veins. France! France the beloved! France of our blood and our heart. France the eternal, resuscitated by the German aggression, once more become the champion of freedom. France hailed by the neutrals, and by all men who respect the right! I was drunk with happiness. This single night was a compensation, for you, noble fellows mutilated in the war; for you, my brother, with broken ear-drums and split skull; and for you, my friends, all my dear dead friends, who sleep in Lorraine, in Belgium, in Flanders, and on the Marne.

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